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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Body Well: Women's Positive Experiences of the Physical Self.

BY

Valerie Kennedy

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT STUDIES

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring, 1994

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Body Well: Women's Positive Experiences of the Physical Self submitted by Valerie Kennedy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Harvey Scott

Dr. Debra Shogan

Dr. Larry Beauchamp

Dr. Sandra O'Brian-Cousins

Dr. Marsha Padfield

Dr. David Johns

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents.
Their lives have constantly witnessed to their belief
in searching, growing, and learning.
In so doing they have challenged each of their children
to follow the same pathway,
and to contribute what is thus gained to others
who may benefit.

ABSTRACT

Three qualitative studies were undertaken; initially focusing on how a healthy body image would be experienced by women. The three studies built upon each other, both in process and in content. The first study asked the two co-researchers involved to describe times of feeling good about themselves. Their responses indicated a number of common characteristics, the chief among them being that in times of feeling good about themselves they were, in actuality, simply feeling good. The self, including the physical self, was not relevant. Because of this a more deliberate and structured focus on the physical self was employed in a second study. Five co-researchers were asked fourteen questions which involved descriptions as to how they perceived their physical shape and movement, and how they thought others saw those same elements. The resultant material gave some indication of the possible timing of the establishment of a personal body image, and the many elements involved in its formation. Overall, there was an apparent lack of personally identifying with the self being described. Towards the end of this second study a shift in focus emerged as a result of the responses of the co-researchers in the first two studies. When describing positive experiences of their bodies the women were not talking about having healthy body images, but rather described feeling and/or being certain ways. Three predominant ways of feeling which were brought forward became the stimuli for the third study. In this last study four co-researchers were asked to recall (i) a time or times when they had felt physically attractive, (ii) a time or times when they had felt physically healthy, and (iii) a time or times when they had moved well. Four themes emerged from the co-researchers' descriptions of the three phenomena: being congruent, being able, being alive, and being connected. A fifth theme concerning the levels in each of these ways of being was also explored. A discussion as to how physical educators and therapists can facilitate the having of positive experiences of the physical self occurs in the final chapter.

PREFACE

When you are asked a question do not feel
that you must give an answer.
When we provide answers they force us
to take up positions.
Instead, realize that the question
has simply indicated a direction
for you to explore.
Wes Dennison

This is about an exploration of the ocean of the physical self. As is true of any ocean, you cannot tell how big it is from any one point within it. There are many directions that you can go, some charted and some unknown.

I have chosen one small sector of this ocean to explore. At first I thought this sector was named 'The Sea of Body Image', but as the exploration continued I discovered that I was actually in 'The Ocean of Body Well'. There are many islands in this area which tempt me to leave the water somewhat and discover how this piece of land relates to it. But because it is the ocean which I am exploring I must not go too far inland, away from the shore. There are many islands which are not landed upon in this particular voyage; they must wait for another time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Over the many years of this research many other people have contributed in various and sundry ways. To my family and friends - much thanks. There were meals dropped off at the door, demands not made, and lengthly talks undertaken, all of which allowed me to continue. In regards to the last factor of talks, I am especially grateful to Warren Zeigler. His insight and interest was key at many points.

Students of all ages and from many types of classes contributed their thoughts and experiences. They have been my motivational source and my inspiration.

To the co-researchers who were the heart and soul of this research: thank you. You did all the work, and allowed me the priviledge of participating with you in your memories. You have taught me much.

But most of all, my appreciation is to God. He gave me the time, and energy, and discernment which turned this work into an experience of flow. I have been richly blessed.

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OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Background and Purpose of the Research

The initial motivation for undertaking this exploration was a concern regarding the negative perception many people, particularly women, have regarding their physical selves. This dissatisfaction has been dramatized by the increase in eating disorders, particularly in young women, to the point that the prevalence of such disorders has been seen as an epidemic (Bruch,1973). The extremity of anorexia nervosa and bulimia is one reflection of the attitude of the general population towards their bodies, as seen in a report of the increase in body dissatisfaction over the past few years (Cash,1990). The possible circular interaction of self-esteem and such negative self-perceptions emphasizes the need to investigate this area. My own investigation of this area led me into work which was described by others as involving the concept of body image. In order to establish an objective for this work I considered the prospect of what it would be like if the initial concern was well addressed: that is, what would a positive perception of one's physical self involve? As the extreme dissatisfaction seen by those with eating disorders had been labelled a distorted or 'sick' body image, the opposite satisfaction/positive perspective would be labelled 'healthy'.

The purpose of the exploration/research thus became - 'What would a healthy body image look like? How would it be experienced and described?' I recognized that, as it was exploratory in nature, this research would be an ongoing process, and would probably raise more questions than it answered. The concept of body image is abstract,complex, and multidimensional. There would therefore be a wealth of material which would impinge upon the investigation. One of my main responsibilities would be to discern what was pertinent to this exploration, leaving other avenues for another time or traveller.

And so the voyage of exploration began. To date three specific undertakings have occurred in the voyage, and the findings emerging from these undertakings form the basis of this report. For purposes of simplification each undertaking will be referred to in the following writing as a study, with the whole voyage or exploration termed the research.

Assumptions

A major assumption of this research was that the participants would be able to recall and describe times in which they experienced their bodies in a positive manner. This was linked with the assumption that, having that ability, they would honestly share their recollections with myself as the researcher.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

From the literature and from personal experience it was apparent that women, and not men, appeared to have the most dissatisfaction with their physical selves. For this reason I decided to only focus on women in this research.

As it is important in this type of research to have participants who can speak to the issue I selected women who would appear to have a greater opportunity to experience their physical selves positively. This meant that I did not seek out women as participants who were limited regarding their physical nature because of health, finances and/or social situations.

Limitations

The research was limited to the discernment of the participants as they were responsible for selecting and sharing the recollections which they felt spoke to the questions.

The material provided by the participants, particularly in the second study, might be affected by what was occurring in their immediate circumstances.

Overview of the Thesis

Outlined in the first chapter is the research question, and the delimitations and limitations of the research. Chapter two looks at the literature regarding the concept of body image, some research that has been done in the area, and an alternative approach to such investigation. Chapter three describes the mode of inquiry selected, and its implementation. Chapters four, five and seven report the findings of the three studies, and reflections from personal experience and the literature related to those findings. Chapter six is interspersed between the reports on the second and third studies in order to discuss the shift in focus which occurred throughout this time period because of what was being

found in the interviews. The final chapter, chapter eight, brings together the process and findings of the three studies. It also includes a brief discussion regarding my personal growth and some suggestions for practical applications of the findings. Prior to beginning any exploration it is necessary to consider what maps of the area exist, in order to plan where to travel, and what may be necessary to take. The following material is an attempt to examine what 'mapping' regarding body image had occurred to date.

OUR BODIES, OURSELVES?

> "Far better an approximate answer to the right question,which is often vague, than an exact answer to the wrong question which can always be made precise."
>
> John Tukey Statistician in
> Naturalistic Inquiry p.338

The initial interest in the focus of this research began some ten years ago when I was instructing a class called the 'Ten Pound Club', which consisted of a group of twelve women who met three times a week for ten weeks in an effort to lose ten pounds or more. As the sessions continued the psychological aspects of self-esteem and self-concept began to overshadow any other concerns. For example, two of the women were too slight to consider losing any weight, yet felt that they needed to "get rid of excess fat". Having expert opinion to the contrary made no difference at all to their thinking. Indeed, others in the group thought these women were being quite reasonable.

Pooling individual histories revealed that most of the women in the group had gone up and down the range of clothing sizes in their adult years. One person mentioned how she still automatically went to the size fourteen rack even though she was now a size ten and had, at one point, dropped down to a size eight. As it turned out, this was a common experience. I began to wonder why these women remembered themselves as their larger past, but never as their smaller size?

Through this and other experience I became increasingly sensitive to the dissatisfaction of women with their body shapes and sizes. Many women felt that they needed to pull and pinch, cover and hide their bodies for reasons that were obvious only to themselves. Bodies in turn were referred to as objects somehow separate from self, and as something that needed to be apologized for, corrected and controlled. As a therapist/educator the I was troubled by this self-negation, wondering where it came from and what might be done to lessen its impact.

More recently personal contact with two young women who were diagnosed as being anorexia nervosa led to further questions. The dissatisfaction with one's physical self which had become apparent in the Ten Pound Club of years before seemed to peak in the attack of these young women on their own bodies. There were many theories which tried to

explain why this might occur.

Hilda Bruch was one of the first to realize the extent and danger of anorexia nervosa, which she noted was found mainly with young women around the ages of fourteen to eighteen. In her description of "genuine or primary anorexia nervosa, the main issue is a struggle for control, for a sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness..." (Bruch,1973,p.251). According to Bruch there was a strong desire for an independent identity, separate from parental expectations and the roles demanded by society. Although everyone around was controlling what one could do, in the area of one's own body 'I' could make important decisions, such as whether or not to eat. In primary anorexia the results of such 'control' - that is, a severely malnourished body - were not recognized by the individual. This distortion of one's body image was, to Hilda Bruch, a key symptom of the disorder of anorexia nervosa.

Other writers and theorists had also investigated possible reasons for the activity of anorexia. Szekely summarized some of the more recent

> ranging from ego-boundary disturbances (Sugarman, Quinlan & Devenis 1982) through poor impulse control (Halmi 1983) to enmeshed families in which parents are unable to make their daughters eat (Minuchin, Rosman & Gailer 1978) to role conflicts (Dunn & Ondercin 1981) due to women's changing situation in our time. (1988 p.17).

Szekely argued that "(i)n North America today, thinness is a precondition for being perceived by others and oneself as healthy" (IBID p.19).

Some of the above theorists agreed with Bruch that perception of the body as much larger than it was was common to those who were anorexic, while others argued that the women involved knew that they were incredibly thin and wished to remain so. This argument about whether or not a 'distorted body image' was integral to anorexia nervosa was attention-getting. Part of the reason for my sensitivity to the term was that 'body image' had become the new focus for many disciplines in which I was involved, from psychology to fitness to education. What were people meaning when they used this term, 'body image'? When someone was doing 'body image work' what actually were they involved in? These questions became more pertinent when it was pointed out by others that I was one of those doing body image work. According to these 'others' in this work people were being helped to correct their distorted body images. I therefore saw as

important the obtaining of an understanding as to what body image was and how, as a therapist, I was helping it become nondistorted. What needed to be clarified was - what was this thing called 'body image', and what would an nondistorted body image be like?

The Development of a Concept of Body Image

Body image, as a formalized concept, is a relatively new abstraction. At the turn of the century it became apparent that damage to the brain through sickness or injury resulted in specific disorders related to the awareness and knowledge of one's body. Thus neurology made the earliest, and to date the strongest, contribution to the understanding of body image (Fisher et al.,1958; Merleau-Ponty,1962; Sacks,1985; Wapner et al.,1965). Initially it was thought that there was one central body image representing the conscious appearance of the body, an inner picture or model of the physical self which was a "straightforward result of associations established during experience" (Merleau-Ponty,1962,p.100). This later developed into a more gestalt approach of a form "in terms of collective and mutual relations of parts of the body" (Wapner et al.,1965, p.5), an interdependence of neural areas which interacted to present "a unified whole ... that is greater than the sum of its parts" (Angeles,1981,p.109). Up to this point an individual's attitudes, intentions and inclinations were not considered, nor was the impact of the context thought relevant. One response to this deficit in the theories regarding body image was an increasing awareness of the interdependence of a perceived structure of the bodily self and the structure of one's environment. The terminology and concerns of the newer field of psychology interacted with the neurological focus in recognizing a multidimensional aspect of "various ... psychophysical functions, such as motor action, affect and emotion, conception, abstract thought and symbolism, and even unconscious physiological processes, (which) are to different degrees at different times involved in the formation of one's body as a psychobiological entity" (Wapner et al.,1965,p.3).

This multidimensional view of the concept sounded as if it could begin to answer some of the questions which had emerged, or at least point out a direction for consideration. One of the dimensions which caught my personal attention was that of motor action. As a movement counsellor and educator this particular element of movement is one which I find important. Physical education as a whole, but specifically the area of movement education, has been defined "as learning to move, moving to learn, and learning about

movement" (Pangrazi et al, 1981, p.1). Any understanding of body image by this profession, therefore, would need to include a person's perception of her manner of moving. As indicated by Wapner and associates (1965) there would also be a necessity of considering the other domains of feelings and cognition, particularly as they affected and are affected by movement.

In this multidimensional approach there was an indication that various qualities were seen as belonging to body image. Fisher and Cleveland's (1965) summary regarding the different foci of research in the area up to their time of writing included feelings towards the body (anxiety, dissatisfaction, preferred proportions), the position of the body in space, the difference between left and right sides, gender designations of various body regions, body size and body boundaries. Fisher's more recent compilation (1986) of research regarding the development and structure of body image added the qualities of body satisfaction and the effects of muscular arousal, being an athlete, and the reshaping of the body through surgery. He described this later focus of the research as attempts to determine "how people make psychological sense of the unbelievably complex body experiences" (Fisher 1986 p.xiii).

Development of a Personal Body Image

The literature survey regarding how the concept of body image came into being also provided material as to how one's personal body image might develop. However, Fisher (1986) noted that there seemed to be "no detailed, well-put-together account of how children construct their body maps" (Fisher,1986,p.47). Various theories existed and various aspects had been investigated, but the theories and the research did not seem to speak to a 'big picture'.

One of the difficulty in investigating any area of development is the pre-language state of approximately the first two years of life. Young children of this age do not communicate in a way which tells researchers what is occurring with them. As well, it is thought that the child's perception is different from that of an adult.

> ... perception in the child is not a simple reflection nor the result of a process of sorting data. Rather, it is a more profound operation whereby the child organizes his experience of external events - an operation which thus is properly neither a logical nor

a predictive activity.
(Merleau-Ponty,1964,p.98)

Nevertheless, various theorists had considered issues concerned with body image development. Fisher(1986) provided a comprehensive summary of the theories of some of the more well-known players in the field, including the work of Piaget, Werner, Freud, Erikson, Schilder and Witkin. At the end of his chapter on body image development Fisher assessed how well the assumptions of these theorists have been supported by research in the area. Some excerpts from that section follow:

1. As theorized, there is support for the notion that the child starts out with a hazy awareness of his own body and gradually evolves a more complex, more differentiated, and more sharply bounded body concept.
2. the body provides a prime frame of reference in the child's learning of spatial directionality.
3. (There is some supportive data) for the assumption that children view their body as a unique perceptual object, especially in terms of ego involvement with it.
4. No data were found to support Freud's notion that the body image formation moves through a series of fixed stages (e.g., oral, anal) with each stage focused on a primary body area.
5. The process of learning that one's body belongs to a specific sex category has been said to be fundamental to structuring the body concept ... Little has emerged from the research literature that can be used to test these ideas. ... On the other hand the fact that there are so many differences in body image between males and females that go beyond sexuality, as such, indicates that the sexual classification of one's body plays a prominent part in body image organization.
6. Although one would, from a common sense viewpoint, accept as a truism that parents shape their children's body attitudes, there is only a moderate amount of pertinent documentation available.
7. ... there are data indicating that although no dramatic alterations in body image occur at adolescence, signs of increased feeling of body vulnerability do arise at this point. It may be that every year in the developmental sequence is

accompanied by its own special problems and that one cannot distinguish model crest points of crisis.

8. ... it is likely that as children grow up they become increasingly adept at monitoring their body sensations and discriminating their meanings. (Fisher,1986,p.107-110)

Also considered by theorists and researchers alike was the question of the stability of one's body image. In most cases it was thought that "the body image appears to behave like a relatively stable 'personality trait'" (Tiemersma,1989,p.48), although in regards to appearance changes in clothing might affect "body-image affective states" (Cash,1990,p.71). The importance of motor activity in the operation of a person's body image seemed to indicate that body image could shift, but in general the research suggested that there was "moderate individual stabilility over time" (Fisher,1986,p.107).

Most of the research which had been done relative to the development of a personal body image had occurred in the natural science paradigm. These studies had "diversely involved drawings of the human figure, identifying body parts, making judgements of the body's position in space, estimating body size, adapting to lens-induced alterations in the appearance of the body, responding to one's mirror image, and so forth" (Fisher,1986,p.47f). Some of the questions which had been considered in the research included when a child would recognize himself as separate from the rest of the world, the development of the awareness of the inside and outside of the body, the difference between front/back, left/right and top/bottom, and the acknowledgement of personal sexual classification.

From the results of the research it was estimated that around the age of two years there is a process of gradual objectification (Fisher,1986; Merleau-Ponty,1964) of the self, in which the child begins to realize that he is separate and unique from the world which surrounds him. This process is encouraged by the development of a "specular image - the image of himself that is gradually acquired by the child from experiences of his own reflection in the mirror" (Merleau-Ponty,1964,p.125). Whereas before the child's main source of information about his body was from his perceptual self, now the mirror provides complete visual evidence. A perceptual cue which also becomes more obvious around this age is the awareness of the bones and heart. Between four and five years of age there is a spurt in ability regarding such items as directionality and structuring body perceptions. As mentioned earlier, this is also the period in which children gain some certainty regarding

their sexual identity. Around the age of nine there is an "upsurge in knowledge about the body in the ability to create realistic depictions of the body, and in manipulating spatial concepts linked to body coordinates" (Fisher,1986,p.104).

Most of the material which looked at the development of a personal body image only focused upon children. Lerner and Jovanovic (1990) considered the development of body image to continue across the life span. They placed their understanding within the theory of developmental contextualism in which there was a "dual role of body image - as a product of social interaction and psychological development and as a 'producer' of (i.e. an influence on) these interactions and developments (Lerner et al,1990,p.111). In her work Sheehy (1974) described predictable crises in adult life which she terms 'passages'. She indicated that "during each of these passages how we feel about our way of living will undergo subtle changes in four areas of perception" (Sheehy,1974,p.21). Two of these areas of perception could be specifically linked with body image: the "interior sense of self in relation to others", and "some shift at the gut level in our sense of aliveness or stagnation" (IBID,p.21). Although Sheehy did not refer directly to body image in her research she did indicate that, for example, around the age of thirty-five there was a personal recognition of the fact of mortality and an awareness of the aging process relative to the physical self. At the present time there has been little, if any, empirical work done to support or refute her theory relative to possible changes in body image.

Tiemersma (1989) discussed changes in body image which occurred in older people.

> In aged persons the body image undergoes a process of regression, together with the growing limitations of the possibilities of the body as a physical entity. Two situations frequently occur: the body becomes a rigid mass or acquires a 'carapace', and secondly, the body looses its resistance and become extremely permeable. These processes continue until death.
> (Tiemersma,1989,p.45)

Raiwet's findings (1990) appeared to contradict Tiemersma's results. Raiwet was investigating how rural elderly couples experienced physical changes. According to her informants physical change was not seen as that important in their lives. "Although physical change was happening, it was usually only noted if it resulted in activity change or could not be adapted to" (Raiwet,1990,p.69).

Whether or not how one saw her physical self developed only across the childhood years or over an entire life span has not been determined. Again, it is important to realize that the research which has occurred to date in the area of the development of a personal body image has been segmented in nature, and has not reinforced totally any overall developmental theory.

Measurement of Body Image

Most of the areas of research discussed above had been done within the natural sciences, and were therefore quantitative in nature, in that an attempt had been made to measure the body images of the subjects. Certain tests had been specifically designed to do this. Movement tasks, projective tests, estimations of size and questionnaires had been the main tools of the natural scientists.

Movement Tasks

Many of the early studies consisted in having the subjects perform a movement task or a series of movements. One major area investigated in this way was the phenomenon of the body-in-space (Wapner & Werner,1965; Witkin,1965). In these studies four sub-categories were considered: the body's sense of vertical, the perception of body (part) size as affected by the size of the space around it, the perception of size as affected by the use of the body part as an instrument, and the body's sense of the medial plane as altered by involvement with an external object. In studies of the first sub-category the laboratory and the individual were both moved out of the true vertical, and the subjects - all men in these studies - were asked to return themselves to their perceptions of the vertical. The difference between true and perceived vertical was the quantitative factor evaluated. The last three types of studies did not require body manipulation but focused instead upon the verbal indications of the subjects as to their perception of size and placement. The method of measurement was consistent with the first studies, that of being the difference between perceived and true. This was the approach adopted to determine body image distortion with persons who were diagnosed as anorexia nervosa; that is, the difference between the perceived and the measurable.

Movement-dance therapists/researchers also asked the subjects to perform a series of movements on which they were appraised (Berstein,1979; Christrup,1978; Espenak,1977).

however some differences from the previously explored style of research were evident. Because the focus was on dance as a vehicle of therapy a whole body activity level was sought. This ranged from the specific, single movements required in Espenak's Movement Diagnostic Tests to the improvised dance-like activities observed by both Bernstein and Christrup.

In all of the above therapeutic situations it was the body as a communicator of self which was being considered. Decisions as to how precisely one could interpret this body language varied among the therapist-researchers. Espenak (1977) was very deliberate in assigning psychological meaning to various parts of the body, and to the way in which specific movement patterns were done. For example, in her interpretation the back represented one's image of self, and the performance of a releve related to "a subjective view of one's own physical body and of the reactions of the self and others to that manifestation" (IBID,p.25). Although this was an interesting approach she appeared to be adopting an oversimplified body language interpretation of 'this' equals 'that', with relatively little apparent basis for that thinking. She also seemed to ignore the interactions of culture, environment and the person's current history.

Bernstein (1979) exhibited a more contextualized interpretation of the movements observed. She analyzed the movement by using an effort-shape notation developed by North (1972) and Hutchinson (1974) as adapted from Laban's work in movement analysis (1974). She then applied Jung's developmental stages to what she had seen in the person's breathing, flow and movement qualities. Christrup's (1978) interpretation was simplified to the amount of participation seen, the number of times the individual was observed moving to music, and the freedom of movement noticed as marked on a nine-point scale (p.157). In this manner she attempted to quantify her findings.

The operationalizing of the variables in order to measure the differences among them varied dramatically between the space and therapy studies. In the former procedures the measurement of concrete distances and angles was set up. In the therapy research a form of checklist recording was attempted. There is a definite irony in the attempt of the latter to quantify qualities. This entailed a relatively large degree of subjectivity in what was seen, and in the perceived magnitude of the behavior. Yet one of the purposes of the research procedures was supposedly to provide the therapists with tools so that they could be objective and avoid these 'problems'.

In both types of studies a second method was incorporated in an attempt to verify the findings. Projective figure drawings, "believed to reflect the individual's concept of his own body image" (Christrup,1978,p.155), were evaluated for the amount of detail in the drawing, the identity/role and sex differentiation, and proportions of parts of the body. The more accurately and comprehensively these figures were drawn, apparently the more developed was the aspect of body image under consideration. According to Freeman and associates (1984) this projective technique "seem(ed) to tap the (cognitive-affective) aspect of body image" (p.411), a consideration missing in many of the other tests designed to measure body image.

Body Size

Fisher and Cleveland (1965) had looked at perception of body size in their studies of the body-in-space. They noted that when a body part, such as an arm, was used to indicate direction, that part was perceived as larger than when it was not in use. If a person found himself in a small area, he saw himself as larger than when standing in a large room or open area. The researchers contended that this focus did incorporate the cognitive-affective component of body image mentioned by Freeman and associates in that "there is a basic tendency for body feelings to be translated into body size terms ... an individual's perception of his body size may be affected by the nature of his attitude towards himself and his body" (p.51). This theory of perception of size reflecting attitude appears to be adopted by those individuals researching the body image distortions of anorexia nervosa patients. The concern in evaluating an individual's body image relative to the above eating disorder was expressed in the attempt to measure the degree of accuracy shown in size estimation of various widths of the body - for example, the shoulders, chest and hips (Fichter et al.,1986; Garner et al.,1985; Slade,1985). The comparing of perception and actuality was reminiscent of the space studies, however the effect of the environment on one's perception of body size explored by Fisher and Cleveland (1965) was not considered in the studies. Another aspect apparently ignored was the emotional 'baggage' that might be attached to specific body parts (Balogun,1986; Secord et al,1953). Due to one's history of interaction with society an area of the body - for example, the waist - may be focused upon in such a way that a reduced presence or enlargement is perceived as necessary. Regardless of these and other weaknesses in this approach the emphasis on body size - more particularly body

width - has continued to be strong, especially in work with people with eating disorders.

Other Measures of Body Image

Other researchers had looked at a self-assignment as to one's perception of their body through the use of questionnaires, generally dealing with selected components of body image. One example of this was the often-used Body Cathexis Scale, developed by Secord and Jourard (1953), which focused on the degree of satisfaction people have with their body parts and processes. Lerner and colleagues (1976) added to this approach a consideration of the effectiveness of the same body parts. This segmenting of the body was a common thread in most of the questionnaires.

Fox (1988) attempted a more gestalt approach in his development of a Physical Self-Perception Profile (PSPP), containing four subscales of sports competence, bodily attractiveness, physical strength and musculature, and physical conditioning. Recognizing that body image is based, at least partially, on one's attitude towards the above components, Fox supplemented the PSPP by designing the Perceived Importance Profile (PIP). The PIP allowed the subjects to individualize their replies to the PSPP "by the assignment of importance weights (in order) to place more emphasis on certain aspects of their (body image) structure" (IBID,p.13)

In his design of the PIP Fox recognized that different aspects of physical self-perception would vary in their importance to individuals. People might perceive themselves as physically unfit and not be at all concerned about it. How might this affect their feelings about their physical selves, their attitudes towards their bodies, their interaction with others - in other words, their body images? Initially it seemed that a negative perception of a part of one's physical self would result in a negative opinion of one's total being. But if this part was not important to the individual how much of the self-concept would be affected?

A perhaps extreme example of the above can be seen in considering the theoretical cosmologist Stephan Hawkin. In his early twenties Hawkins was diagnosed as having amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a motor neuron disease. Now in his forties, he speaks through a computer. Every physical act for his survival must be done for him by someone else. Pictures of him reveal a wizened, elf-like body and face, shrunken and wasted. Yet in talking of himself he said that he was able "to lead a fairly normal life and to have a successful career. I was again fortunate that I chose theoretical physics, because that is all

in the mind. So my disability has not been a serious handicap" (Hawkin, 1988,p.vii.) His self-concept appears solid in that he appreciates his value to his field and to those around him, as well as to himself. His physical state is not perceived as "a serious handicap".

Further Citiquing of Body Images Tests

Perception of Space

Review of the literature revealed that various researchers have realized that all units of an entity are not necessarily perceived in the same manner. Space, both that which surrounds us and that which is filled by us, is not only an objective aspect of dimensions, made up of meters and hectares. "The lived experience of space is dynamic: space is 'created' personally" (Langeveld,1983,p.189). How space is experienced may be affected by many things. One factor, perhaps, is the personal feelings connected with being in that particular place. The experiencing of a laboratory setting is different from that of the kitchen in one's home. A meter in the former may seem much further away than in that place where every centimetre has been travelled many times. To a certain extent natural science research had recognized some of the dynamics herein by taking some studies out of the laboratory and into the field. Doing that took into consideration one factor of lived-space, that of familiarity, but did not effectively control for the interaction of others on a shared space. An empty classroom, seen by the new teacher from her desk, may appear cavernous. Filled with wiggley,squirming bodies on the first day of class it may have become claustrophobic in size.

As indicated earlier Fisher and Cleveland (1965) discussed findings of their earlier research which suggested that the amount of space about subjects affected the perceptions of the length or width of their own body parts. If the surrounding space was shared with strangers objectively viewing subjects who were directed to indicate their arm's length or head's width - was this the same space as shared with a friend playing at the same activity? Was it not possible that the different experience of space would affect the perception of the size of personal parts of the body?

Fisher and Cleveland (1965) also discussed how the activity engaged in affected how the body was perceived as filling space. Moss (1978) pointed out that use of a part of the body increases the awareness of it, and therefore altered how that part was seen in occupying space. Intentional direction of that activity, such as the pointing used in Fisher

and Cleveland studies, would create a different perception of the space covered, and therefore a changed estimation of that covering it - in this case, the arm.

How a person interacted with space was also determined by "how a man feels at the moment ... the total state of feeling which goes through a man" (Bollnow,1961,p.38). This included one's general feeling about self. Szekley (1988) suggested that a woman who questioned her value to society may feel that she did not have the right to occupy space, and therefore any space that she did occupy was too much. This may have been one of the motivating factors behind the never-too-thin syndrome Szekley saw as prevalent in North American women.

All of these elements of 'being-in-space' need to be considered when looking at body image. This is especially true as perception of body size has been one of the main components of body image identified for research and therapeutic purposes. How we perceive our physical selves rests upon how we perceive who and what we are in our world. The size estimation studies done regarding eating disorders occurred in isolation, as if none of the factors mentioned above would affect the variables being measured. The space studies made some attempt to make connections, but still limited themselves to objective physical settings. The questionnaires brought in the possible effects of personal feelings on body image, but did not consider an ongoing interaction with the world.

Preselection of Aspects

In each of the studies discussed above there was a predetermination of the aspects of body image which would be considered. The importance of those aspects to the individual in the development and maintenance of body image was only minimally investigated. One possible exception was the more in-depth work done regarding body boundaries (Fisher et al,1953). Yet the weighing of an aspect by a person has an important bearing of how the perception of physical self occurs (Fox, 1988).

Another limitation of this preselection of aspects is the then omission of other components. For example, why was width selected in the size studies instead of weight? What about body volume? Space, and its possible interplay with body image, has been partially explored, but the interaction of time has not been touched upon in the traditional studies. The prereflective recognition of the internal rhythms of one's body may be as much a part of body image as how one is self-seen as filling space. In my own work it has been

noticed that the rhythm of the client's body in movement contributes to how physically able a person see herself being. There is also the factor of how moving in synchronization with others might affect how one sees his physical self.

Others have recognized how this preselection can create a false confidence regarding the understanding of body image. Fisher (1986) put it succinctly when he said that "it does not make sense to sample some conveniently limited aspect of body experience and to assert it is The Measure of Body Image" (p.xiv).

Lack of Clarity Regarding Goals

In considering the ways in which body image had been measured in the above tests a further question arose: if a person was accurate about her body size would it follow that she had a healthy body image? That is, does accuracy in judging how wide your hips are or in aligning yourself with the 'true' vertical mean that you have a 'good body image'? This question is directly connected with attempting to determine what people mean when they say that they are 'working on body image'. What goal are they aiming for in this work: what criteria determines if they have reached it?

In the fitness field it is relatively easy to say that the goal of the work is, for example, flexibility. There is a specific definition of flexibility which includes an indication of how to measure its improvement. "Flexibility is defined as the range of motion around a joint or group of joints (and) ... is specific to each joint" (Holloway, 1985, p.6-2). It is therefore clear that the fitness leader wants to set up situations which will help the clients extend or maintain their range of motion, and that it will be possible to measure if that is occurring by noticing the smoothness of the movement around the joint, and how far it will allow the attached limb to travel.

But this clarity is not available in regards to body image. There is not a definition of the term which will allow an individual to determine if improvement towards a specific goal is actually occurring. A major reason for this weakness is that, except for specific aspects such as accuracy in determining the widths of different parts of the body, there does not appear to be a specific goal. Therapists working with anorexics may consider that accuracy of body size perception is the necessary improvement, but will that accuracy indicate a positive change in body image? What if the client was accurate in her perception of her body size, and wished to remain at that level, as in cases which Bruch would call

'secondary anorexics'? What does working on body image entail in these cases?

Lack of a 'Larger Picture'

There were many potential aspects which had not seen the light of research, some of which were referred to above. Also lacking was a setting in which those aspects which had been considered and explored could be set. The various measures of body awareness brought forward by Fisher and others in their perusal of research in the area have a totally disconnected and segmented approach as to the degrees of body awareness. What is the big picture which the research is attempting to illuminate? What is the overall concern and function of this research? These questions were shared by at least one other investigator disquieted by the free-floating bits and pieces. Fox (1988) evinced some surprise "that a systematic unravelling of key constituents of the physical self (had) not been attempted" (p.9). The richness of how 'I' perceive 'my' body could not be adequately explored by the methods of natural science. Was there another method available which could be employed to try to answer some of the many questions?

The Dualistic-World Viewpoint

It is necessary, at this point, to consider the setting in which the research discussed above was embedded. Approximately two thousand years ago both Eastern and Western cultures began to propagate the belief that one's "immortal spirit was a temporary prisoner in a corruptible, mortal body with the good life as an escape from the flesh into pure spirit" (Nelson 1978). This approach to the physical aspect of man later laid the basis for Descartes' contention of the mechanical nature, not only of the body, but of all phenomena (Buytendijk 1974). True understanding could only occur for man "if he goes to each thing ... with his mind alone, taking neither sight nor any other sense along with his reason" (Plato 1951/1979 p.149). This belief system was the core from which the early research on body image was conducted.

The change in view regarding the physical self as an element of value to that which must be overcome occurred over a considerable period of time. It was most clearly articulated in the philosophy of Rene Descartes (1629), and has since that time been referred to as the 'Cartesian split'. Descartes coined the phrase 'Je pense, donc je suis', which has been used by others as a proof that, through the use of a process of 'systematic

doubt', we do in fact exist. Barrett (1978), however, stipulated that "it is not the existence of Descartes the man that his thinking certifies, but only the existence of his consciousness - and then only in the moment he brings it to full self-awareness: when, in short, he is aware that he thinks" (p.125). In this manner Descartes adopted and underlined a belief system whose credo was that there was a separation between the physical and the mental self, with the latter being the actual site of self. This thinking was later described as 'the ghost in the machine' (Ryle,1949) in which "the ghost is consciousness taken as an immaterial substance; the machine is the human body, mechanistically conceived; and the former is somehow hidden inside of, or mysteriously haunts, the latter" (Barrett 1978 p.78). It was the 'ghost' which was perceived as that which mattered. All else was, at best, subordinate, and at its worst was seen as demonic in its obstruction of true consciousness. The peak of evolution would occur when mankind could drop its need of the physical self and exist as pure thought.

In his focus on consciousness Descartes "splits the mind off from a realm of objects (the body being one), which it proceeds to understand in quantitative terms very different from those of everyday life" (Barrett 1978 p.127). This separation of the mind from objects, and of 'understanding' from everyday life, described a duality of thinking in which there were "two different elements which may live together in an uneasy truce but are frequently in conflict" (Nelson 1978 p.37). At the same time Descartes brought into the realm of philosophy that which was already underway in the area of science - the primacy of measurement in the search for knowledge and understanding. With Galileo he:

> demonstrated that all physical objects in the world, originally given to us by perceptual experience, could always be designated quantitatively by mechanical formula ... Since the quantitative conceptualization of physical objects lends greater exactitude and precision to them than viewing them experientially, the quantification of physical objects quickly acquired scientific superiority over experience.
>
> (Colaizzi,1978,p.50)

The predominant thinking of that time which has continued into the present makes possible the following:

Downstown
by Tim Downs
...AND THAT'S THE WAY WOMEN ARE.
IT IS NOT!
SURE IT IS. I'VE MADE A LIFE STUDY OF WOMEN.
LOOK, LAYLO, I HAPPEN TO BE A WOMAN!
SO WHAT?
SO WHAT?!
HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY THINK THAT YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT WOMEN THAN I DO?!
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MONKEYS, DO YOU ASK A MONKEY OR AN ANTHROPOLOGIST?
THERE'S OBVIOUSLY NO REASONING WITH YOU.
AAAIIIEEEEE!!

(Edmonton Journal,1990)

Although the above may cause some smiles it was the logical outcome of the duality outlined by Descartes and others. The everyday experiencing of life was only recognized when it agreed with what had been 'discovered' through stringent measurement and objectification. That which consciousness was examining was separated from it and "imprisoned in the categories of the objective world, in which there is no middle term between presence and absence" (Merleau-Ponty 1962 p.80).

In each case cited in the summaries of research described in the previous section there was an attempt to understand the way in which consciousness was operating in its presumed executive role over the body. The body itself was nothing more than a collection of tissues formed into a particular structure inside of which resided the important mind/soul. This viewpoint had been so strongly adopted by society as a whole that an individual's perception of his personal body - his own 'body image' - was seen through the same glasses. "If this is what the body is, than this must be what my body is" (Ardell 1982, Szekel 1988). Whether it was acknowledged or not, the vast majority of research into the concept of body image had been firmly placed within the split world of Descartes in which:

> We can assume the guise of physical or natural scientists, abstracting completely from our own feelings or values, and describe in total objectivity what takes place in the area of our concern; then, relating this area to others, we will eventually have described everything that is true of the natural world.
> (Kaeline,1964,p.170, in Gerber,1979)

Quantitative versus Qualitative Research

All of the research mentioned earlier had employed mainly quantitative (i.e. counting, numerical) methods to investigate the concept of body image. In this approach the many questions mentioned earlier had not been addressed. As expressed by Giorgi (1975) the focus on numbers in data gathering "seemed to me to be at best an unnecessary difficulty, and at worst, an obfuscation of the problem rather than a clarification" (p.72).

The initiating concern for the present research had been why people, specifically women, did not appear to accept and appreciate their physical selves. The measurement of widths and angles did not go beneath what could be seen by an outside observer. I could see it was important to learn what was happening within the individuals themselves.

Another way of looking was necessary in order to illuminate the areas which I saw as important. Various reading pointed towards considering a qualitative approach to the question. This approach was labelled 'human science'as compared to the previously described 'natural science'. "The various human science orientations and approaches ... have certain characteristics in common: a focus on meaning in the study of ... reality and a methodical approach that uses descriptive, interpretive, and critical devices" (van Manen,1981,p.1).

The majority of the quantitative research has been done within the duality thinking of the Cartesian split-world. Qualitative research, on the other hand, did not accept this view. "The close context of physiological performances with the specifically-human way of existence ... cannot be adequately examined and understood if one continues to view bodiliness as a complicated physiochemical system in which all changes as processes only make possible a causal explanation" (Buytendijk,1974,p.16). Other writer-researchers also questioned the main assumptions of the traditional, natural science (Jennings,1986; Merleau-Ponty,1962; Salner,1986; Valle and King, 1978).

Objectivity

One major assumption of the split-world perspective which was attacked by the qualitative researchers/philosophers was the concept that researchers must keep a distance, both physically and mentally, between themselves and the object of the study in order to maintain an all-important objectivity. Natural science saw itself as investigating 'facts', and in order to do that personal feelings and biases could not be allowed to distort what was

being treated.

This objectivity has been perceived even by some natural scientist as an impossible requirement, (e.g. Babbie,1979) as personal involvement emerges in every step of research, from the selection of the topic, through to the phrasing of the question, the method of operationalizing, the interpretation of the data, and finally, to the conclusions reached. With a subject such as body image the fallacy of the separation of the observer and the subject was even more evident, for it was the subject her or himself doing the observing, the evaluating, and the organizing of the perceptions.

Cause-Effect

Another premise of the traditional approach which was questioned by qualitative researchers was that of cause-effect, which was seen as limiting, and often misleading. In the natural sciences thinking was seen as occurring in a very linear fashion, with one element sequentially preceding the other. And because one was before the other there was an assumption that the first caused the second to occur. Alan Watts, as cited by Valle and King (1978), illustrated a serious problem of this approach.

> Consider someone who has never seen a cat. He is looking through a narrow slit in a fence, and on the other side, a cat walks by. He sees first the head, then the distinctly-shaped furry trunk, and then the tail. Extraordinary! The cat then turns around and walks back, and again he sees the head, and a little later the tail. The sequence begins to look like something regular and reliable. ... Thereupon he reasons that the event 'head' is the invariable and necessary cause of the event 'tail', which is the head's effect. This absurd and confusing goobledygook comes from his failure to see that head and tail go together: they are all one cat. (p.10f)

Watt's metaphor clearly showed the folly of applying the cause-effect rationale to something which was, in fact, a unit. The difficulty in following through on the idea of 'unit' is the inability of recognizing what makes up the whole, and what - in fact - might actually be separate. Ecology, the study of "the interaction of organisms and their environment" (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary,1974 p.230f) has formalized an understanding which has

been inherent in the world view of aboriginals for a long while - that we are a part of everything around us, and everything is a part of us. If this is so then the cause-effect rationale becomes less and less feasible, as there is nothing which is separate. The riddle - "which comes first, the chicken or the egg?" - became applicable to virtually everything in life.

In a practical way this sense of oneness extended to repudiating the concept that people were distinct from their environment, and therefore could be examined in a sterile laboratory setting. The being-in-the-world of qualitative research stated that people were active, in that they acted upon their world, and passive, in that the world acted upon them.

> ... people are not viewed as just objects in nature. ... (there is) the total, indissoluble unity or interrelationship of the individual and his or her world. In the truest sense, the person is viewed as having no existence apart from the world, and the world as having no existence apart from persons. Each individual and his or her world are said to co-constitute one another.
> (Valle & King,1978,p.7)

Accepting this concept of co-constitution meant that trying to consider an aspect of humanness, such as body image, as separate from the experience of living it could only lead to a superficial and perhaps erroneous understanding. Buytendijk(1974) has shown in his work that aspects of living, such as being sleepy, or being hungry, did affect how a person saw and related to their physical self. As mentioned earlier even the traditional sciences had uncovered that the space around an individual and the use of a limb would affect estimations of length and/or size (Wapner and Werner,1965; Witkin,1965). The validity and applicability of studies done in a sterile laboratory setting was therefore questionable, as the very variables which may be integral to body image were artificially screened out. Because of the focus on cause-effect a part of the whole, perhaps even the 'trunk', had been cut out.

Observable, Measurable

A major split from the approach of natural science by the qualitative approach was the negation of the criteria that the phenomenon under question must be physically observable and measurable. This restriction has in effect eliminated the study of the mind

or of personal experience, replacing it with the study of behavior. For how could the love of a child by a parent be measured, or the creative process involved in painting a picture be observed? In the natural sciences only those aspects which could be quantified - i.e. counted - could be considered. And it was not long until it was only those measurable aspects which were thought to be 'real', because they were seen as 'scientific'.

But the approach of looking at life as qualities sought a different subject matter, one which did not lend itself to being measured. Husserl, the founder of one branch of qualitative research called phenomenology, stated that the proper task of this approach was "to clearly apprehend and delineate the basic acts of consciousness" (Jennings, 1986,p.1235) in meaning-conferring acts. Thus the focus of qualitative research became the essence[1] of a particular phenomenon, and until this essence was understood its relationship to another element could not be investigated. According to this approach, until that essence of body image is known by its description in the lived-experiences of people the effect of, for example, movement therapy on its development could not be reasonably determined. Even more to the point, until the experiencing of a healthy body image was understood the objective of such therapy could not be set.

But now there is in a quandary. The discussion above indicates that it is only in its ecology, or pattern of relationships, that the essence of any quality may be explored. But until the essence has been understood relationships cannot be investigated. There appears to be a vicious circle from which there is no escape.

Linear vs Circular

Perhaps the problem is one of perspective. As mentioned earlier quantitative research is based upon a linear viewpoint of the world in which one step proceeds another which in turn is followed by the next. In this viewpoint not only is there a specific sense of time, but also of space in that happenings occur as discrete entities, one separate from another. Adoption of this perspective can result in quandaries such as that outlined above. It may be possible to consider such questions as posed above as happening, rather, within 'chaos'.

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[1]Jenning's definition of essence as " a fact or entity that is universal, eternally unchanging over time, and absolute" (1986,p.1232).

The 'science of chaos' is a relative new comer to the academic world, first recognized in 1961 by Edward Lorenz. In programming a model for weather conditions he became aware "that very similiar conditions can give rise to very dissimiliar behavior" (Pilger,1990.p.16). As Lorenz continued to investigate this unpredictability he became aware of a kind of order. This order was termed 'nonlinear dynamics' and has since been applied to many different kinds of behavior, including human. What is applicable to this discussion is the concept that "it is even hard to know where to begin when tackling a nonlinear problem" (IBIB,p.19).

Considering various elements which are thought to be part of a larger entity termed 'body image' may begin to illuminate patterns of relationships to other aspects of being. At the same time, searching for the 'essence' of self may cause us to stumble over the interaction of various parts and particles. As with the concept of co-constitution one aspect does not occur before or in front of the other. They are all the same part of the pattern of chaos which we call living.

The Qualitative Body

One type of qualitative research, that of phenomenology, focuses on those attributes of body image which specifically emerged in the interaction described above of the body with its world. As mentioned earlier, this method of phenomenology investigated meaning-conferring acts, including the experiencing of persons of their bodies within different phenomena. Examples of such phenomena included being-awake, being-hungry, and being-moved (Buytendijk,1974). I found it difficult to fit these phenomena within the areas outlined by Fisher and Cleveland, and the subsequent authors. It appeared more appropriate to attempt to fit those areas looked at under the natural sciences within the phenomenon being considered. For example, how does the phenomenon of being-awake affect feelings towards one's body, the perception of the body size and body boundaries, and perception of how one was moving?

Merleau-Ponty is a phenomenologist recognized for his contributions to the field, including those regarding the self-perception of one's own body. Operating according to the different objectives and assumptions described earlier affected the way he valued and oriented himself to the human body. In so doing he uncovered perspectives of the body not pursued by the natural scientists.

A strong contention of Merleau-Ponty is that, although the body may be able to be looked at and touched by others as an object, my body cannot be related to in such a manner. This shift from the distance of 'the' to the intimacy of 'my' entails a major reconstruction of thinking. It was the choice of the classical/traditional researchers to stay with their emphasis on being objective which had led to an ironical situation.

> This representation of the body, this magical experience, which (the researcher) approached in a detached frame of mind, was himself; he lived it while he thought about it.
> (Merleau-Ponty, 1962,p.95f).

In so limiting themselves the traditionalists had omitted "other 'characteristics' whereby one's own body was defined" (IBID,p.93). One of these characteristics was the fact that the body has the power to give a person 'double sensations'. For example, if an individual is touching her left hand with her right she is as aware of being touched as she is aware of touching. And each time one part of the body comes in contact with another part this double sensation occurs. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to interpret that touching in the same way as touching an object which is separate from oneself.

Another aspect missed in the consideration of the natural scientists, or at least not investigated in any depth, was the affective nature of body image. The involvement of the person's ego in this manner was recognized in the field of movement therapy.

> The normal individual's attitudes towards his body may mirror important aspects of his identity ... the individual has a unique way of perceiving his own body as contrasted to non-self objects. As such, this body image or body concept frequently serves as a screen or target upon which he projects significant personal feelings, anxieties and values (Fisher et al.,1965,p.48).

The body was thereby recognized as the incarnation of attitudes about and towards oneself.

A third characteristic involved in the defining of 'my' body was the fact that the body was not moved by some outside force from place to place, but was moved by 'I' directly.

> I do not need to lead it (the body) towards the movement's completion, it is in contact

with it from the start and propels itself
towards that end.
(Merleau-Ponty,1962,p.94).

The source of the motivation for the movement becomes cloudy. To say that it is the brain initiating the movement is to say that it is the body, for the brain is but another one of the organs found in the body. Is it the mind, the emotions, or perhaps the spirit which is responsible for the movement, and, if so, in what manner does it do so? Where, in these questions, is the 'I'?

Recognizing these characteristics of one's own body relative to one's self underlined the inappropriateness of the quantitative approach to investigating how a person 'saw' her body. There was no possibility of the objective distancing or standard measurements of the natural sciences. The evaluating 'tool' was that very thing being investigated.

An Alternative Approach

In the literature reviewed so far there was an apparent polarity between quantitative/natural methods and qualitative/human approaches. This polarity was clearly expressed in Wilhelm Dilthey's argument that human phenomena - that which is mental, social or historical - differed from the natural phenomena of the physical, chemical and behavioral animal in that

human phenomena require interpretation
and understanding (and) natural science
involves for the most part external
observation and explanation. ...
(H)uman science is the study of meaning:
descriptive, interpretive studies of patterns,
structures and levels of experiential
and/or textural meanings
(van Manen,1981,p.2)

The material from Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception (1962) which was discussed earlier indicated that the attempt of natural science to stay objective enough to externally observe and explain body image did not take into account that the 'tool' doing this procedure was itself a body, therefore 'tainting' the data which was being collected. As objectivity in this area was not possible another set of criteria would be needed by which judgements could be made. Qualitative research held out the possibilities of such standards.

Selected aspects of Phenomenology

One particular type of qualitative exploration which seemed appropriate was that of phenomenology. Various elements within it were seen as helpful in determining important criteria in setting up a valid study. Some of those elements are explored below.

Where natural science searches for causes, phenomenology looks for meanings, for essences. To the follower of the former enough research done will lead to the understanding of all things, but to the phenomenologist more research leads to more questions. Involved in the search for essence is the search for truth. In his discussion of the etymology of 'true' - from the Greek "alethes", meaning 'unhidden' - Barrett (1979) brings out the everydayness of the illumination of truth:

> From the moment we opened our eyes a
> world was disclosed to us. Familiar
> faces, houses, streets, cars, trains,
> all that stand out clearly to us.
> Wherever there is disclosure, there is
> truth. To be in a world - any world -
> is insofarforth to be in the truth.
> Barrett, 1979, p.161

The question was, therefore, what was it that this present study was seeking to 'illuminate'? What was it that was the "fact or entity that (was) universal, unchanging over time, and absolute" (Jennings,1986,p.1232) - that is, the 'essence' of this 'body image' entity? And, if Barrett is correct, will not this essence be found in the being in the world, the everyday?

Another important characteristic of phenomenology is that which is termed 'bracketing'. Wertz (1984) defines bracketing as a continuous process of the suspension of preconceptions in which one attempts to become aware of and put aside presuppositions and biases, both personal and cultural. Phenomenology is "a return to the foundation of meanings, things, and experiences, and (seeks) to describe the foundations accurately and clearly" (Seaman,1982,p.119). An important part of this thinking, therefore, is the rigorous process of searching out and putting aside one's own predispositions, vested interests and biases.

> Phenomenology must describe what is given to us
> in immediate experience without being obstructed
> by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions.
> (van Manen,1989,p.9).

Although this is the objective of the researcher it is recognized that in being human one cannot fully cleanse the self from that which makes it up.

In his discussion of the necessity of giving up past understandings in order to incorporate new learnings Scott Peck also used the term 'bracketing'. Initially his use of the term appeared to differ from that of phenomenology, but in Peck's citing of Sam Keen's work on the concept it became clear that the basic process was the same.

> Mature awareness is possible only when I have digested and compensated for the biases and prejudices that are the residue of my personal history.... Each time I approach a strange object, person, or event I have a tendency to let my present needs, past experience, or expectations for the future determine what I will see. If I am to appreciate the uniqueness of any datum, I must be sufficiently aware of my preconceived ideas and characteristic emotional distortions to bracket them long enough to welcome strangeness and novelty into my perceptual world. ... In order for genuine novely to emerge, for the unique presence of things, persons, or events to take root in me, I must undergo a decentralization of the ego.
>
> (Peck,1978,p.73)

I began to realize that such a process of checking my personal biases and preconceptions would indeed need to be continuous if anything of value was to emerge from my research.

A third element of phenomenology which appeared appropriate to my research was one which has already been mentioned, that of the concept of the co-constituting nature of the world. The need for this viewpoint was emphasized in the consideration of the research in the traditional scientific approach. This perspective brought about the thinking found in the following discussion.

The temptation to consider body image in the same manner as its covering umbrella of self-concept is strong, by breaking the concept of body image into components of description and evaluation, or esteem. This is the procedure which Fox (1988) and others have incorporated in the development of their body image tests. There are at least two fallacies in this approach. The first is the assumption that the sum of the parts make up the

whole, contrary to the gestalt thinking inherent in the term 'body' itself, which had been defined as an "organic entity" (Murray et al,1961,p.32). The attempts to break down this entity into separate parts ignores several factors. In the dissection of 'body image' the connective tissues and their supporting network are rendered inoperative, as if they were not necessary to the item being studied. Yet it is this 'background' which gives life to that which is being investigated. As well, the separating into parts presupposes that all the parts are known, and that they are all available to be put together to (re)form the object. This is rather like trying to put a cracked egg back into the shell. With an abstract concept such as 'body image' it is probably accurate to say that "all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put (this) Humptey Dumptey back together again" (Mother Goose).

The second fallacy in this approach is the lack of investigation into the connection, if any, between/within the body and body image. For example, a person can have a medically-healthy body and yet exhibit an unhealthy body image. Psychosomatic medicine emerged, in part, in recognition of this problem. Also, does the fact that a person accurately perceives his body shape, size and performance indicate that he will necessarily apply this to create an accurate body image? Is it sufficient to ask if a person likes a body part without clarifying how important that aspect of the body is to the person herself? Does cognitive understanding automatically affect how a person 'sees' her or his body? Fisher (1986) seemed to indicate that accuracy and perception regarding body image were not necessarily the same thing when he said that : "the accuracy with which subjects could identify their own body type was not significantly related to how positive their self-body appraisals were" (p.70).

As I become more aware of these and other questions I closer towards Merleau-Ponty's description of phenomenological reduction:

> "Not because we reject the certainties of comman
> sense and a natural attitude to things ... but
> because, being the presupposed basis of any thought,
> they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed,
> and because in order to arouse them and bring
> them to view, we have to suspend for a moment
> our recognition of them" (1962,p.xiii).

In this present research what was being considered for exploration was indeed imbedded in what was normally "taken for granted", that is, our physical self. As described by van den Berg (1952):

> ... we are our body. He who perceives that a malignant disease has attacked his body, surely does not console himself with the remark that his illness is only concerned with his physical shell; he knows that his whole existence, his psychical life has been struck by a calamity. The worried mother who is sitting by the bedside of her sick child and caresses his little arm, does definitely not caress a sheath which is supposed to hold her child, but she touches the child itself, the caressing contact of hand and arm is the contact of two human beings, without any barrier, direct.
>
> (van den Berg,1952,p.38)

In attempting to determine what a healthy body image might be like I wanted to ask individuals to bring to awareness that which was not only, literally, at a gut level, but also that which was the being-aware. This prospect appeared to be a difficult one.

The review of the research on body image set within the dualistic world indicated a sense of pecking at the edges of the concept, rather than a dialogue with anything of substance. Body image was seen as something which one had and therefore was measurable by standardized tests, and thereby kept at an objective distance. Even the labelling of a test as standardized had put aside the possibility of the dynamics which occur within and because of being an individual. Barrett's metaphor of a building highlighted the problem.

> Two men stand outside a building. ... The two men ... discuss the merits of the building and the possibility of their entering it. ... (but) both stand outside the building; neither speaks from within it.
>
> Barrett, 1979, p.298

Clear to me was the need to explore the concept of a healthy body image by, at the least, entering the 'building', if only to explore a tiny part of one room. I began this exploration by designing and implementing three different studies, each one seeking a different perspective on the issue. The methodology of these studies is outlined in the following chapter.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The intent of this research was to obtain a rich and comprehensive understanding of women's perceptions of their bodies as positively experienced. Three study areas were explored, the content and process of the last two emerging out of the study before it.

This chapter considers briefly the naturalistic paradigm which was deemed appropriate for this research. The research designs employed in the three studies are outlined. A discussion of the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, as described by the naturalistic paradigm, is included here. A brief summary of the three studies concludes this chapter.

Naturalistic Paradigm

The approach for this research was based upon the axioms of naturalistic inquiry as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This form of inquiry was seen as appropriate to the nature of the subject under investigation. Both the literature and personal experience in the field indicated that body image, healthy or otherwise, is a multiple constructed reality and as such can only be studied effectively in a holistic manner. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) such an holistic approach of inquiry is based on five assumptions, or axioms focusing on ontology, epistemology, truth, causality, and axiology.

The first axiom is concerned with the ontology of the naturalistic approach which states that realities are multiple and constructed, and as such cannot be investigated by the fragmented approach of positivistic research. The second axiom speaks to "the relationship of knower to the known" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985,p.37) and indicates an interactive and inseparable relationship between the investigator and the respondent. This relationship develops, changing and being changed by the data collection and analysis. The axiom regarding truth states that truth is bounded by context and time, including the contextual situation of each respondent. The aim of the investigator thus becomes to develop "an idiographic body of knowledge" (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.38) which is based upon the experiences of each respondent. Because of the overlapping multiplicity of the realities involved the naturalistic approach states that it is impossible to determine causality. Rather, explanations are inferred based upon an holistic perspective of the material emerging in the

research. The fifth axiom refers to a recognition of the inquiry being value-bound by:

> inquirer-values... by the choice of the
> paradigm that guides the investigation ...
> by the choice of the substantive theory
> utilized ... by the values that inhere in
> the context.
> (Lincoln and Guba, 1985,p.38)

The naturalistic approach is based upon the emergent nature of any theory, and therefore it is a framework, rather than a theory, which becomes the third value factor.

In their discussion of the naturalistic approach Lincoln and Guba refer to the human sources of the data as respondents. Other researchers have named such sources 'co-researchers', a term which I have adopted in this work. I feel that the term 'co-researcher' more adequately describes the interactive and collaborative relationship which developed over the period of the research. As the researcher I initiated the questions, undertook the study, and pulled together this document. The exploration of the recalled experiences and their possible meanings was done with each co-researcher, resulting in the thick description presented.

The emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry leads to a different research design from the controlled experimental studies of the positivistic approach. The unfolding aspect is also considered to be appropriate to this research because of the indeterminate nature of the research question.

Research Design

> ... within the naturalistic paradigm
> design must be emergent rather than
> preordinate: because meaning is determined
> by context to such a great extent; because
> the existence of multiple realities constrains
> the development of a design based on only
> one (the investigator's) construction;
> because what will be learned at the site is
> always dependent on the interaction
> between investigator and context, and the
> interaction is also not fully predictable;
> and because the nature of mutual shapings
> cannot be known until they are witnessed.
> (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.208)

This emergent nature of the research design does not mean that there is chaos, as there is a "characteristic pattern of flow or development" (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.187). Elements of that flow pertinent to this research are reflected in the following description of the purposive selection of the co-researchers, the strategy selected for data collection and its implementation, and the analysis of that data.

Selection of Co-researchers

The focus of this research grew out of experience with women and their perceptions of their physical selves. This, and the literature on body image, pointed to the idea that women had a more negative perception of their bodies than men. For this reason I decided to only approach women as possible co-researchers.

The naturalistic approach employs purposive sampling

> based on informational, not statistical considerations. Its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization.
> (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.202)

Thus, random selection from a focus population was unnecessary. What was required was that the co-researchers "have salient experiences of the phenomenon in their everyday worlds" (Becker,1986,p.105). It was also important that, in their struggling to describe their experiences of the phenomenon, the co-researchers were reasonably articulate.

For these reasons the women were selected as co-researchers based upon the meeting of the following criteria:

1. a reasonably high level of physical activity, either in their past and/or in the present time. This ranged from competing at a collegiate level to swimming and walking for personal fitness.

2. having few, if any limitations in their physical ability due to injury or disease. In actuality I discovered that two of the women in the three studies were in the process of rehabilitation, one from the results of a car accident and the other from major surgery. Another of the co-researchers contended daily with severe allergies and asthma.

3. a perception by others of the relative successfulness of the women in their chosen areas. These areas included graduate school, nursing, drama, missionary work, and undergraduate studies in art and medicine.

4. an ability to articulate experiences. The educational levels indicated above seemed to speak to this aspect.

The co-researchers were contacted by myself and asked to take part in the research. Upon their agreement to do so they were informed of the procedure which was to be employed in the study in which they were involved. This information included the questions which would be used to initiate the descriptions. The co-researchers were also informed of the focus of the study, that being an exploration of what a healthy body image might 'look' like.

A total of ten women were involved in the three studies. Study One - "Feeling Good" - had two co-researchers, one of whom also took part in the third study. Study Two - "Questions" - involved five women, and the last study had four women as co-researchers. The age range of the co-researchers was from twenty-one to late sixties. This last point is mentioned as the developmental nature of body image in adults was alluded to in the second study.

Collection Strategy

Each of the three studies was based upon the employment of semi-structured interviews with the co-researchers. Becker (1986) clearly outlined why this format would be appropriate for the focus of this research.

> Researchers use interviewing because the phenomenon they wish to articulate is deeply imbedded in the relational and dynamic human world. These phenomena are hard to speak about, yet are readily identifiable in the subject's everyday experiences. Because it is also dynamic and relational, the interview provides a human context that motivates the subject to take up the task of articulating complex, lived experiences. (p.102)

The amount of the structure seen in the interview format varied within the three studies. The first and third studies used a basic focus of one or three prompts, respectively, to initiate the interviews. The second study employed more direct questions aimed at determining the co-researchers' thoughts on how they perceived themselves and how they thought others might perceive them. Issues that surfaced from the literature on body image,

my personal experience, and from the co-researchers themselves, formed the basis for the conceptual framework from which the questions and prompts were derived.

Many different formats are presently being used by those employing the interview method (Becker,1986). The "'think-aloud' method of interviewing subjects" (IBID,p.111) was selected for this research. This method was selected because of positive personal experience, finding it non-invasive and providing a richness of material.

The co-researchers were prompted to focus on describing their experiences of the phenomenon, with some interpretation and analysis also occurring. The interviews in the first study, along with self-reflection, were used to generate a series of questions which formed the basis of the second study. The material of the first two studies then likewise gave direction to the selection of focus for the interviews of the last study. This process followed the approach indicated in the fourth element of field studies in the naturalistic approach, that is the "projection of next steps in a constantly emerging design" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985,p.187f).

Some investigators ask the co-researchers to write concerning the focus. This procedure was not adopted, because

> sometimes it is easier to talk than write about a personal experience, because writing forces the person into a more reflective attitude, which may make it more difficult to stay close to an experience as it is lived.
> (vanManen,1989,p.62)

The interview format involved the initial focus, such as recalling a time or times of feeling good about oneself. During the oral recall other prompts were provided by the interviewer to help the co-researchers deepen and clarify the description. The questions provided by Polkinghorne (1981) were useful:

> How did my body feel? What emotions were present? How was my experience of time and space? How was I present in the experience? How were others present to me? What was the encounter with the physical and cultural environment like? (p.14)

The actual conducting of the interviews was standardized across the three studies. After permission to do so had been given by the co-researchers each woman was

interviewed individually, and the interviews were audiotaped for later reference. Each interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours.

The last study involved three different prompt foci, thereby involving the four co-researchers in three interview sessions each. Each co-researcher chose her own order of responding to the prompts, resulting in a good variety as to which phenomenon was spoken to first, second and third.

Each co-researcher was offered her choice of where and when the interviews would occur. This was done in order to facilitate a relationship of trust and collaboration. Some interviews occurred in the individual's home, some in mine, and some at my office. In the third study in which more than one interview was done per person, the duration of time between interviews was approximately one week. There was one exception in which the conflicting schedules of the co-researcher and myself led to her interviews occurring over a two month period.

Data Analysis

The audiotapes of each interview were transcribed within the following day, and from the beginning a thematic or category analysis was employed. Van Manen (1989) indicated that "making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure - grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (vanManen,1989,p.73). Lincoln and Guba (1985) likewise indicated that initially, at least, the seeing of meaning draws heavily upon an individual's tacit knowledge.

In my reading and rereading of the increasing number of transcripts of the interviews I used my tacit knowledge in attempting to answer the question: "what statement(s)or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?" (vanManen,1989,p.87). Those statements were then highlighted. This highlighting was done in various colours to allow for coding into different categories. The constant comparative method was used (Lincoln and Guba,1985) to tease out how one highlighted phrase differed from another, and to try to place it in one category/theme or another. Clarification of placement, as to what caused a phrase to 'fit' into one category or another, helped to "integrate categories and their properties" (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.342). Discrete themes began to emerge and be articulated.

This process was followed in each of the three studies. Throughout the studies the material was periodically checked by the co-researchers as to its accuracy and interpretation.

Trustworthiness

The issue of trustworthiness, as described by Lincoln and Guba(1985), is basically whether or not the findings of a particular research are worth paying attention to. When doing naturalistic inquiry this means that four criteria must be met: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this section I will briefly clarify what these criteria are, and how steps were taken to meet these criteria and thus ensure that the research was trustworthy.

Credibility

Credibility speaks to the question of how true the findings of the research are; that is, if "the reconstructions ... that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.296). Certain activities taken by the investigator contribute to the possibility of such credibility.

One of these activities is prolonged engagement. Through my years of work in the field of physical education I had learned the 'culture' of active, healthy women. Prior to and throughout the time of the research I was constantly testing my own biases and information through bracketing. The changes which occurred in the design and content of the inquiry indicated that I was responsive to the information which the co-researchers were sharing. Attempts at building trust included encouraging the co-researchers to choose the time and place of the interviews, the gaining of permission to audiotape the interviews, and the assurance that there would be anonymity for the co-researchers.

Another activity which contributes towards the likelihood of the research findings being credible is that labelled 'triangulation'. In this inquiry more than one person was employed as a source of description, and it was the commonalities across the reports that led to the themes. Also, the material provided by the co-researchers was compared with that outlined in various writings on the same subject, as brought out in the 'Reflections' segment in the report on each study. A third aspect which was used in the triangulation process was the employment of more than one type of question, as seen in comparing Study Two with the other studies.

There are certain techniques that assist is establishing credibility, one of these being peer debriefing. Two women were part of this aspect by their input over different periods of time.

The most appropriate technique for this research regarding establishing credibility was that of member checks. Five of the ten co-researchers took part in formally reading and responding to my interpretations relative to the interview material. This was done at various stages of the inquiry, as the thematic breakdown was explored. The women were asked to determine how accurately their experiences had been portrayed, and how appropriate they felt the categories and their descriptions to be. Two of the co-researchers were also involved in a less formal manner in this checking. As well, previous study insights were checked with the co-researchers in the next study. Material thus provided by the co-researchers, in both written and verbal form, was incorporated in the write-up. This incorporation was then re-checked with co-researchers from each study.

Transferability

Transferability differs from the generalization of the traditional approach. "The naturalist can only set out working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found to hold" (Lincoln and Guba,1985,p.316). This involves the presentation of a 'thick description' which following investigators will compare with their findings. The write-up of the three studies in this report contains such thickness.

Dependability and Confirmability

Both of these aspects of trustworthiness depend upon an inquiry audit, and so will be considered together. An inquiry audit is metaphorically based upon the financial audit. In order to check on how accurately accounts were kept an auditor will check an 'audit trail', or the records of all the business transactions which have occurred. In an naturalistic inquiry there is also a need for records to be kept of various aspects of the study. These aspects include records about the raw data, the data reduction and analysis products, the data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, and information regarding the development of the instrument.

As all of the interviews were audiotaped there is this particular record of the raw data. Transcripts of the interview material also meet this need of record keeping. A journal

was kept by myself which recorded impressions of the interviews, and questions which came to mind through reflection and conversation with others. The keeping of the journal also spoke to records needed relative to what was occurring in the process and how the instruments of questions and myself were developing.

Records of data reduction and analysis include condensed notes of the transcript material, particularly for Study Two. Colour-coding sheets relative to the thematic breakdown were also kept. Data reconstruction and synthesis products is carefully recorded in the various drafts of this thesis.

Summary of the Three Studies

As indicated earlier three studies were undertaken in the exploration of what a healthy body image would look like. Although each study employed semi-structured interviews as its format the extent of the structure varied. Studies One and Three used guided recall prompts to initiate the interviews. Study Two had thirteen short answer questions to be considered by the co-researchers (Appendix A).

Study One: The prompt for this study was: "Remember a time or times of feeling good about yourself."

Study Two: The questions in this study emerged out of the readings, my own experience in the field, and the interview material of the first study. These questions were geared to help the co-researchers explore how they saw themselves relative to their looks and movement, and how they thought others saw them.

Study Three: The four women in this study were asked to recall three specific phenomenon: a time or times of feeling physically healthy, physically attractive, and moving well.

FEELING GOOD

This study began with asking two women to recall a times or times in their lives of feeling good about themselves. Each of the co-researchers, as with all persons, was unique in her approach to life and the life experiences which she brought to the interview. With only two co-researchers in this study I found it possible to allow for an expression of this uniqueness by the separate telling of each individual's 'story' as it emerged in the interview.

Jane's Story

Delight and Amazement

For Jane being in the out-of-doors was an integral part of feeling good.

> In the outdoors, in the country. They are really important for my sense of well-being, connectedness.

> It was a beautiful day. The snow was glittering. I looked up and saw the cedar waxwings. They fly in formation and when they turn - the colour - there's almost a sheen on their wings. There's something; it's almost like magic because they turn at the same time. That one moment - it was just wonderful. The whole scenario.

As Jane continued to talk it became obvious that it was not only the being outside which made the time wonderful, but the sense of awe and joy she experienced while there in the watching and the appreciating the birds. This delighted amazement was central to most of the times which Jane recalled.

> When you find out that animals are so capable ... things like dolphins - how intelligent they are. It makes me really happy to read about it and realize how intelligent they are, and how little we really know about them. And we think that we are - we are very amazing. But so are they.

> I took a religious studies class, purely out of interest. Wow! There was something that made me feel so good about being alive or a human being or something. Everyone has a fascinating way of thinking and it's all - they're all very much similiar and you get that sense of connectedness and that excitement.

Connection

In trying to understand how these times of appreciating the animals and other humans about her were, in fact, times of feeling good about herself, I asked Jane to clarify if there was indeed a connection.

> Yes. For some reason there is a kind of connection. For example, when I'm in the outdoors and I see something like those birds or I can just look out the car window as I'm driving along and there is this beautiful, unbelievably gorgeous scene - like the sun setting - it just makes me feel good about myself too. Being all part of that.
>
> When there's really interesting ideas being bandied about - that gives me a good feeling about myself and about everything. So it's kind of connectedness that makes for me a good feeling.

So for Jane the sense of being a part of something which was amazing and delightful was as important as recognizing that 'something'. She developed this idea of connection even further towards the end of the interview. Once again she was expressing how important it was for her to be outdoors, this time in comparing living in the country with being in the city.

> That urban situation tends to take out of you that sense of connectedness, that sense of real awareness, not only of yourself but of the environment. Maybe it works the other way as well. Before you can be aware of yourself you have to be aware of the environment.

In this instance the co-researcher was talking about being aware of herself in a positive way. Jane appeared to be saying that she couldn't know who she was in a

constructive way until she knew with whom and with what she connected. If she was accurate in her summation then it is not surprising that the decontextualized approach of much of the research on body image has resulted in findings which suggested a negative attitude towards the physical self.

Self-Aware

I did not feel, however, that the objective of the study of learning more about the physical self in times of feeling good about oneself was being met. Although it apparently had been established, at least to some degree, that Jane had been talking about times of feeling good about herself, I believed that it was necessary to proceed and explore how she felt physically during those times. So I asked her if she was aware of herself in the moments she had described, with the intention of then eliciting memories of - for example - her breathing or carriage. However, she replied:

> Not really aware. I think that's what makes me feel even better. When I'm not really aware of myself. I just feel so good. I don't really feel good about myself, per se. When I'm happy it has a lot to do with the connectedness and it also has a lot to do with not being aware of myself or being or (rather) being aware that I am just one part of a whole. Or the insignificance. I think it is so amazing.

How would Jane recall her physical self at times of feeling good if she was glorying in not being aware of herself at all? If body image is constructed and built up out of our embodied experiences, as discussed in Chapter Two, then what kind of materials could possibly come out of a time of unawareness? This is particularly confusing as in the time being described the sense of being an individual was apparently over-ruled by a sense of connection, and possibly within that connection a sense of insignificance?

There were times of feeling good for Jane which did involve an awareness of herself in the situation.

> I love to dance. It gives me a good feeling because I love the music and the creativity in it. And then once the creativity happens with the movement it is just so beautiful. And it feels wonderful too.

> The little things that make me happy about what I personally do are things like little achievements ... It makes me happy momentarily to do a good job on a paper ...

But as expressed by Jane these times of personal achievement and performance were not long-lasting in nature. At the time they gave her a feeling of goodness, but they did not meet an important criteria which the previously mentioned ones had.

> I get better feelings from these other things. It's a bigger feeling that <u>when I think about it again it makes me happy about it all over again.</u>

A major part of the experience of feeling good involved "a bigger feeling" that:

> I guess you are outside of yourself. That's what it is.

Where this "outside of yourself" placed Jane was unclear, but again it was important to her that her awareness be different from what she experienced otherwise. And within that difference there were levels of feeling good for her.

> Things that I did personally - like self-awareness, as with the dancing - made me feel good, but it wasn't nearly the same quality of feeling that I get when I'm doing those other things that I am describing.

<u>Place of Movement/Body</u>

In the interview so far the co-researcher had not directly indicated any connection between the feeling good about herself and her physical self. Because she was engaged on a regular basis in a high level of physical activity, including a special interest and involvement in dance, I thought that movement would be more important to her. And so I asked Jane directly if movement made any contribution to her feeling good about herself.

> Sometimes it does, but it's not the most important variable. I think it is being in the outdoors that does. But the walking - the rhythmical movement of the walking is probably conducive. So movement is one component that adds to it, but it is only one of many. But movement is important,

> and it does make me feel good. If I'm
> able to control my movement and if I can
> be aware of my body movement.

The last statement seemed to contradict the discussion which was outlined above regarding self-awareness. If she was unaware of herself in times of feeling good how could she be controlling her movement at the same time? As the interview continued Jane indicated that these movement-connected times of feeling good that she was describing belonged to the "temporary feeling of accomplishment" which was at a lower level than the outside-of-self times. I began to wonder if having a physical self was at all necessary to the experiences of feeling good about one's self? What if it had been possible for the body to not be present? Would Jane still have felt right about herself in these peak experiences? Did the body have anything to do with the feeling good?

> I think it (the body) is a facilitator.
> I think with the rhythmical movement of
> the paddling or the cross-country skiing
> or the walking. That it's kind of conducive.
> I think I feel that happiness more intently
> when I'm walking or skiing or doing those
> kinds of things. It's like when you're
> listening to music and you allow yourself
> to move while you're listening to it. It
> seems to somehow enhance it.

Moving could, therefore, be an important contributor in the feeling good. Later, however, Jane indicated that awareness of that movement could interfere with the enjoyment.

> I find that when I run too much I become
> self-absorbed. I hear myself breathing
> and all I can feel is my feet pounding.
> I never even see where I am running past.

Again the very fact of the awareness of the physical seemed to interfere with the feeling good about one's self. There is an argument that one is only aware of the body when there is injury or disease or some other kind of discomfort. A corollary to this might be that not feeling good about one's self is connected to the awareness of self. And therefore in a description of feeling good awareness of the self is not relevant. The attempt to clarify if this was what was really being proposed led to a discussion in which the co-researcher made a number of distinctions.

I used to do all the things that I get a good feeling from now, but the over-riding factor was: 'Oh man, you're fat!' That obsession so that I was always a little bit unhappy so that marred the feeling of really feeling good about myself. I would be in this wonderful situation, and my mind would wander back to -'I can't believe how fat my thighs are'. I was so self-aware of my body that it would over-ride my ability to really enjoy situations that would otherwise make me feel really good about myself. That good feeling that I get from being alive, of being a part of something big.

(So that when you're aware of yourself you can't be as aware of being part of something else?)

Exactly. You're hyper-aware of yourself.

This conversation appeared to be saying that it was the being aware of one's self in a particular way which was a limiting factor in the feeling good. In the instances cited Jane was most unhappy about her body as she perceived it. If she had become aware of her physical self in a positive light would that awareness still have impeded the sense of feeling good? If, for example, she had noticed her thighs and thought of them as well-developed, would that have been so distracting?

Jane had indicated that self-awareness, or perhaps more accurately, self-focus, would affect her sense of belonging to something bigger. And that sense of connection was a consistent part of her description of feeling good. I noticed Jane's inclusion of the term 'hyper-' in this discussion of awareness, indicating an above normal/natural/average state. This was also reflected in her comments about this being an "over-riding factor" or "obsession". If one was noticing the physical self in an objective manner would this same negating of feeling good occur?

This idea of different kinds of awareness was brought up by the co-researcher herself.

I think that you have to go in the direction of being aware of the body first. Over the past six years I got to the point where I am fit but not

> superfit. I'm not obsessed with:
> 'I've got to do at least three miles
> today' or I would get compulsive.
> Now it's more like: 'I'm going to go
> for a walk today' and that's enough.

The more recent awareness of herself which Jane was describing involved a questioning of what was necessary. By her comments here and elsewhere during the interview Jane had indicated that she had, in the past, perceived her body as something to be controlled or disciplined to such a degree that missing, for example, one day of intense running would result in a catastrophe. Her relationship with her body, by the time of the interview, had undergone a change regarding trust which allowed her to release her constant attention to her body, and to approach her activities in a more diffused, relaxed manner. Yet the concept of her body as a possession separate from her 'self' still persisted. At the time of the interview the relationship with this 'possession' was one of taking care of rather than one of controlling and disciplining, but there was still the sense of being separate from her self. Jane's change of relationship had resulted in an increased appreciation and enjoyment of her physical aspect. The awareness of the body which was presently occurring was one of a positive nature.

> I'm aware of the fact that my body's
> looking a lot better than it has for
> years and I'm eating better. I'm
> letting it sleep more, and exercising
> it regularly instead of excessively.
> And now I can move from here.

Jane was still concerned that even this positive awareness could be taken to extremes, thus becoming a hindrance to feeling good about one's self.

> This (awareness of the body) always has
> to be a component, but you don't have to
> be so aware of it as we can get to be.
> Advertising. I think you can be too
> extremely body aware. Keep it in
> perspective. It is only one of a number
> of factors you've got to have to be happy,
> to feel good about yourself.

Jane's comments suggested that if the awareness of the physical self was kept in perspective it could be used as a basis to aid in being able to do the things that contributed

to times of feeling good. For Jane it was one of the necessary steps along the way to an awareness beyond the self.

> So being fit enough and being body aware enough got me to the point where I was able to experience not even thinking about the body.

Self-Conscious

Perhaps this discussion on whether or not self-awareness is an inhibitor or facilitator of the phenomenon of feeling good can be assisted by the participant's own attempt to distinguish between self-awareness and self-consciousness.

> ...everything sort of falls into place. Or you feel that - yeah, I guess you are outside yourself. That's what it is. It's not being as aware of yourself anymore. That makes me much happier than being really aware of myself. 'Cause then I get self-conscious.

Just what happened when Jane became self-conscious was shown almost immediately. Initially she had been giving fairly detailed descriptions of feeling good in general. Many of the senses had been employed in her recall of these experiences. She was comfortable, enjoying both the remembering and the telling of those times. Her voice was enthusiastic, her eyes alight, and her body was alert, vital. I made an attempt to focus her more deliberately on her physical self by asking how she thought others would see/perceive her at times when she felt good about herself. The whole mood of the interview changed from one of feeling good to one of feeling embarrassment. There was a slight collapsing of her body, and a dulling of both her voice and her eyes. She could not seem to relate to the actual question, responding instead with an evaluation of her physical self by herself. At that time there was a defensiveness or a timber of apology in her voice as she focused on her physical self.

> I think I would feel better about myself if I were slimmer. I'm pretty fit right now so I can't really see that I could get much fitter, yet I'm still pretty hefty.

Although Jane contended that she accepted herself in her 'hefty' state her tone of voice and her posture appeared to indicate that doing so took a fair amount of determination. The flow of the previous part of the interview, when she had been describing times of feeling good - that flow and animation were dampened. She had become conscious of herself - that it, self-conscious - in such a way that she was no longer able to take delight in her surroundings and in her interaction with them.

Importance of the Physical?

According to Jane one of the aspects of the physical self which appeared to contribute to the ability to go beyond self-consciousness was her relatively high fitness.

> When I get those really good feelings
> I'm relatively fit, otherwise that walk
> (mentioned as one example of feeling good)
> - it is quite a long walk. I would have
> been bagged. All I could have thought of
> would be 'I've got blisters on my feet' or
> 'I ache'. But because I was fit enough I
> didn't feel those things any more.
> So being fit enough ... got me to the
> point where I was able to experience not
> even thinking about the body.

As with the awareness of the body itself there was a basic level of fitness which she needed to be at before she could forget about it. If Jane was hampered from doing a particular activity by how that activity made her feel it would be difficult to be in a state of enjoyment. Jane's comments began to be falling into a theme that the body was part of feeling good only in the sense that there was an optimal level of awareness of it and an appropriate fitness level to keep the body from distracting from the phenomenon. Being physical did not contribute in any other way to times of feeling good. Jane's descriptions suggested that a healthy body image was no image at all.

But then Jane brought to the fore at least one manner in which being physical was integral to the experience.

> We were in New Zealand, Kathy and I, on
> this little beach. This amazing storm
> came in and Kathy and I couldn't tear
> ourselves away. It was really warm.
> We were walking up and down the beach,
> just up and down the beach. All we did

was walk back and forth and watch the clouds and watch the rain come down and watch the birds. You feel like you are facing something huge, natural and huge. You are so close to the elements. Physically feeling the elements. We were aware of the physical sensations. And when you are aware of them then they give you a real sense of happiness. The wind blowing - a really strong wind.

Jane was sharing her discovery that, without a physical self and its corresponding sense organs she would not have been able to respond to what was happening. The concept of connection which she consistently brought into the description of feeling good was - to a large extent - one which occurred through the physical interaction with the surroundings by her physical senses. And it was because her fitness level was such that she could be in that place in that way - 'walking up and down the beach' - that she was able to have this physical interaction.

Healthy Body Image

The idea of self-consciousness which had emerged earlier in the interview became even more important at the end of the session when we attempted to see if what had been said fit into a description of a 'healthy body image'.

It is important to have a healthy body image so that I can enjoy - anything. Get out of myself. Don't worry about it. Get beyond it.

(We keep coming back to the apparent fact that you are unaware when you're healthy. So what is a healthy body image - being unaware of one? How can you have an image when you don't have one? What image is there?)

Feeling. I think it is a sensation - a feeling that contributes to the overall feeling. It's no image. If you do have an image then you are thinking too much about it.

(Not visual?)

No, definitely not. I think it is kinesthetic - a sense of 'Hey, I can reach up and do that. And I can scratch my back'. What you look like, standing on the scales and all that - doesn't do it. You don't feel good about yourself just because you're standing on the scales and you've lost five pounds. That is a momentary sense of achievement only.

It (body image) is always necessary. It's always there, and you can't pin it down to anything visual. It's a feeling - a feeling of feeling good.

Ingrid's Story

Unlike Jane, Ingrid focused specifically upon how her body was in times of feeling good about herself. She had discussed some ideas with myself regarding body image prior to the interview itself, and this therefore became her emphasis in her recalling times of feeling good about herself. In her effort to speak directly to the issue of body image she perhaps limited herself regarding the richness of her experiences in feeling good about herself. Nevertheless, she did reveal many important aspects of this area.

Connected

Jane's story had seemed to circulate around the idea of being connected with what and with whom was in her environment. Ingrid also talked about being connected in her description of times of feeling good, but with Ingrid it was more of being intraconnected within herself, and the experience was very body-based.

At a camp in Holland. There I developed this feeling of more 'being in my body'. It's a feeling - more complete in your body. Maybe more connected to all the parts of your body. Like the feeling that it's all completely there. After the summer I felt more connected to my body. It was there and I was in it. More complete. Not two separate things - like your body isn't part of you or parts of your body you don't want.

Ironically Ingrid referred - albeit indirectly - to her earlier experiencing of her physical aspect as if her body had not being present. The most concrete element of her being, that part which was perceivable to those around her had, previous to this time, not been "completely there". In her own interpretation, as stated here, her body had been absent to her self. Or perhaps, as she indicated later, it was more that her 'self' - whatever that term may have meant to her - was absent from her body, not "in it".

What was the difference in what Ingrid was describing between the past and the time of the interview that led her to indicate that the body was, at the time of feeling good, completely there and she was in it? Her comment which followed indicated that in those past times there had been parts of her body which she hadn't wanted. That comment pointed to a sense of rejection of her body parts which, at the time of feeling good about herself which she was describing, she was not experiencing. This rejection of the body and/or its parts was not unique to Ingrid, as such rejection was seen in much of the research on body image and in my own work with women.

An intriguing aspect of Ingrid's description was that apparently, in this experience of feeling good, the absence of the rejection seemed to be a component of feeling whole, totally intraconnected. And totally present - "completely there". Did this mean that rejection and partialness were inter-related? And if that was so, might it also be true that looking at ourselves as made up of parts, as often occurs in our dualistic society, might lead to and/or reinforce rejection?

With Ingrid there appeared to be an acceptance of the physical self as it was in this 'being in the body'. Perhaps at that moment in time how Ingrid's physical state was at such a level that it was close to a self-desired goal, and therefore all the perceived parts of herself were congruent, meshing with each other. And thus she felt whole. Her self-image of being strong, athletic, and able was actually born out in her body - she was those things physically. Because what she wanted and what she was matched she was able to accept her body and its parts.

> When I talked about the summer I was training ('85) I was still building on this feeling that I developed in the camp (in Holland, 1980). It was not really different. What added to it the summer I was training was the feeling of being able to be physically

> active, and use it. Being strong. Maybe it's more related to my self-image of being an athletic person. That self-image was not developed as strong in '80 as in '85.

Ingrid's sense of congruency between her body and her self-image was reiterated as she focused upon what it was like to be aware of herself in a positive manner.

> Being conscious of your body in a more positive way: you feel that it supports your being, your performance. It stands behind you.

In this case her 'you' and her body were giving the same message, expressing the same viewpoint. She was consistent. Also, this part of the conversation revealed that Ingrid needed to know that she would be able to count on her physical self, that in attempting a particular skill or an activity she would be flexible and strong enough to do what she wanted. There wouldn't be any sudden buckling of the limbs or tearing of the muscles. At the time being described Ingrid was maintaining a relatively vigorous training program. Her need to know that her body could be relied upon to support her performance was only logical.

Competency

Ingrid enjoyed the sense of competency she experienced at times of feeling good about herself.

> The idea that I'm doing the kind of thing I want to do and I feel competent enough to do that. The physically being able to use my body for whatever I want to do, and being physically active.

Being competent enough to do what she wanted was central to Ingrid's feeling good. And what she wanted to do was be active. As the interview continued I realized that Ingrid's perception of having this ability to be active was based upon her physical fitness level.

> When I'm training a lot and feel slim. Those are the major components. Then I feel good in my body. Strong and flexible, at the same time.

> Because those are the things I train on. And energetic. And slim.

At the time of her life to which she was referring Ingrid's "being physically active" meant training to compete in artistic gymnastics. She was not simply engaged on a regular basis in fitness classes or walking/cycling for pleasure. She was pushing herself in workouts geared to help her move towards her potential in performing the skills of this activity. Because of this intensity in her workouts Ingrid was probably at or near to her optimal level of physical fitness. Is it possible that as there are levels in our physical fitness there are also levels in our sense of feeling good about ourselves? And, if that is true, would there be a direct correlation between level of physical fitness and level of feeling good? If Ingrid was talking about feeling good in her present state of fitness, which is not as high as in '85, at her time of training, would she be describing the same things? These are questions which emerged again in Study III, and are discussed there in more detail.

Another consideration relative to experiencing a sense of competency which Ingrid described was how it affected her perception of her future.

> And what is important is the feeling that it is going to be well in the future - the near future. For example, if I do well in a paper and I get good feedback it gives me the feeling that my next paper will be good. I'm on the right track. It's not really rationale, but it's more of a feeling. I'm on the right track : it's something I can do in the future.

<u>Others?</u>

Another aspect of being able to do what Ingrid wanted related to some extent to other people's expectations of her.

> Feeling good is the feeling of freedom, of not being tied, or restricted, or limited by other people. It is this being free to do what I feel myself, not being limited by what another person is doing. I think it's the independence.

Upon hearing this I initially felt that in times of feeling good about herself other people's opinions were not that important to Ingrid. At such times she was exempt from having to be limited by what was happening around her. She could be free to do what she wanted, be who she was. Yet another aspect of feeling good for Ingrid appeared to contradict what she was saying.

> It also has to do with my relationship with people. When people react to me in a nice way I feel good about myself.

Other people's opinions did matter to Ingrid, even at times when she was feeling good. But there seemed to be a limit to this effect upon feeling good.

> Everything is 'perfect' in the moments when I would feel good in all the areas (mentioned above) and one of the areas will be particularly good. For example, someone is being kind to me and I didn't expect it. Those times are usually really short - five minutes and then go back to normal.

Although it was not made clear in the interview, the times of independence referred to earlier, and times of people being nice to her as indicated here, did not seem to create the same sense of feeling good about herself. The latter was more momentary in its effect. There was something different in the two ways of relating to others, and the impact upon Ingrid as to how she felt about herself.

Self-Conscious

Involved in the discussion above was an awareness by Ingrid of how others may have been thinking about her. For many people this concern about other's opinion is perceived as a type of self-consciousness. Ingrid brought out this concept as she described what was not present in times of feeling good about herself.

> Maybe I loose a bit of my self-consciousness. If I feel self-conscious then I'm conscious of my body and it (this consciousness) is not really positive. When I'm self-conscious the body is in my way. Actually, I don't want to feel it. I do feel quite awkward.

> I don't know what to do with my hands, my feet. I feel like I don't want to be there.

Although Ingrid did not specifically mention here her awareness of others watching as a contributing factor in this self-consciousness exchanges with myself at other times had pointed in this direction. Ingrid felt that such self-consciousness resulted in an awareness of one's body which "is not really positive". It is therefore not surprising that remembered times which are perceived as positive would not have this element in them.

Healthy Body Image

Because Jane had emphasized the importance to her in times of feeling good of being outside I decided to ask Ingrid if being outdoors had any part in her feeling good. As indicated at the start of this section, this co-researcher kept her responses focused on body and body image, which once again was obvious in this part of the conversation.

> I like being outside but I'm not sure it's related to my body image. Actually, when I'm outside I tend to forget more about my body than when I'm inside. I think I am more enjoying the nature than my body.

This forgetting about her body appeared to be the opposite side of the coin of self-consciousness discussed above. When Ingrid was outside her concentration was likewise outside - that is, outside of herself, on 'nature'. I was interested to note that being outside to Ingrid was linked with enjoyment, "enjoying the nature". Thinking of being outside automatically provoked a memory of a positive sense of being. Ingrid went on to attempt to connect being outside with what this might mean relative to her awareness of her physical self.

> What being outside can do is make me realize more what my body is like. That long hike in Jasper (after having serious trouble with her back). Being able to use my body. I wonder if that had to do with my body image. It was much more based on a feeling. On the internal feeling of having used my body that much.

Because of severe pain in her lower back Ingrid had been virtually crippled for approximately a month. With assistance and adaptation in her lifestyle she was able once again to be active. For her, using her body "that much" was a return home to what she was used to doing and enjoying. As indicated in the section on 'Competency' it was very important to Ingrid that she be able to do what she wanted to do.

Ingrid brought out an interesting point here that awareness of her returned ability was experienced as a feeling, one which she later expanded upon.

> Internal imagery - kinesthetic feeling.
> Can't really come up with an example of
> when I started to give more attention to
> the feeling - to what I felt internally
> than what I thought other people would
> see me like.

The term 'feeling' is unclear here as to whether or not Ingrid is simply referring to the kinesthetic sense[1] or if she is including emotions in this reference to feeling. This latter reference appears to limit itself to the kinesthetic, but the former one seemed more open. In any case, this concept of feeling was applied to what a healthy body image might be like.

> (It was a healthy body 'feeling'
> rather than an 'image'?)
>
> I do understand the distinction
> but I think that body image does
> exist, but on another level than
> body feeling. There is some
> connection but it is not the same.
>
> Image is something you build
> up in your head and it doesn't
> have to be accurate. Maybe by being
> able to experience your body, being
> in contact in your body in a more
> complete way you can get a more
> accurate body image. Maybe
> you need to connect external and
> internal image of your body somehow.

---

[1]"a sense mediated by nervous elements in the muscles, tendons and joints and stimulated by bodily movements and tensions; also, sensory experiences derived from this source" (The Merrium-Webster Dictionary,p.392).

And here a dichotomy/duality appeared, that of internal and external.

> Internal imagery - kinesthetic feeling.
> Externally: more visual and looking.
> This picture that you have of yourself
> from the external point of view. Maybe
> this way of externally seeing yourself
> is much more related to how you think
> other people watch you. When you
> (are aware) internally you are more
> aware of your own feelings and what your
> body feels like.

This last comment emerged almost as a way to conclude/summarize the conversation, and as such seemed a rather intellectual exercise. It was not until later reflecting by myself that the depth of ownership that it expressed was recognized.

At the end of the interview Ingrid seemed to indicate that for her a healthy body image was one which drew upon both levels of self-perception, the internal interacting with the external, and visa-versa.

> Maybe need to connect external and
> internal image of your body somehow.
> Go back and forth and relate those two.

Similarities

Although each of the co-researchers responded uniquely in their recalling times of feeling good about themselves based on their own perspectives and life experiences, they also shared many points in their descriptions.

<u>Self-Awareness vs Self-Consciousness</u>

During times of feeling good about themselves each woman's awareness of that self was different than 'normal'. For Jane who she was and how she was ceased to be at the forefront of her awareness. Instead, she perceived herself as simply "just one part of a whole". And it was her delight in the 'whole' which had resulted in her feeling good, if indeed it had happened in such a linear, cause-effect manner at all. Jane described this change as a lack of awareness of herself in the times of feeling good.

When talking about being in the out-of-doors Ingrid likewise referred to a lack of personal awareness. When outside she would "tend to forget more about (her) body than

when (she) was inside." During the interview Ingrid had deliberately kept her focus on the body and on body image in her responses because of her knowledge of the focus of the study. Because of this her reference to forgetting about her body has been generalized, perhaps incorrectly, to a forgetting about her self. And forgetting has been seen as another descriptor of 'not being aware'. As with Jane, during the positive times Ingrid was tuned into something aside/beyond her self, and that was "enjoying the nature".

What the awareness of the self was like during normal times did not really emerge in the interviews. That there was a difference between normal and these times of feeling good seemed apparent in that the experiences described had been selected by the co-researchers because they in some way stood out from what was happening in the day-to-day. I assumed that in times of feeling normal or not so good or even bad there was a different consciousness of one's self for these women.

Both women had described a different awareness of themselves which they associated with more negative experiences, an awareness which they termed self-consciousness. For Ingrid this self-consciousness resulted in or was part of times of feeling awkward, or as she expressed it: "I don't know what to do with my hands, my feet. I feel like I don't want to be there". This sense of herself was lost in that it was not present in times of feeling good about herself.

Jane had even more to say relative to being self-conscious. For her, also, self-consciousness was a negative state of affairs which emerged when she was "really aware" of herself. In her case it was awareness of the self as a negative element, as in the time when she perceived her thighs as fat in the middle of an experience which would otherwise be positive. As she said about herself: "I was so self-aware of my body that it would over-ride my ability to really enjoy situations that would otherwise make me feel really good about myself". Instead of seeing herself as part of a marvellous whole she, or rather a negatively-perceived part of herself, became the total picture. And this picture was unacceptable.

In the section, 'Jane's Story', a concrete example of the impact of such self-consciousness was described as it occurred in the interview itself. Although Jane stated that she accepted her present physical state she did so in an apologetic manner. And her physical condition was described by herself in the denigrating term of 'hefty', which she later said was all right to be, but her tone of voice did not coincide with her statement. At that particular moment in the interview she had become self-conscious, focussed upon

herself instead of upon the phenomenon of feeling good.

Outside The Self

Jane was explicit in her description of the bigger feeling of feeling good as a being "outside of yourself". It seemed that the removal of the blinders of self-consciousness not only opened her 'eyes' so that she could 'see' that which was around her, but it allowed her to actually leave herself in some way. She did not describe this as an out-of-body experience, nor did it appear to be - in any way - a rejection of herself. Jane linked it with the decrease in the awareness of the self, and it might have simply been the change of focus to outside of self, to beyond self. Yet this simple statement provoked questions regarding what is meant by 'outside'? Is this a reinforcing of the duality of inside vs outside? And if so, are we talking about what is inside and outside of the membrane of our skin, that porous organ of our body? Or is it that we are talking about the inside and outside of ... of what?

There may be a connection with the material in the above discussion and Ingrid's description of the internal/external as she perceived it.

> Maybe (I) need to connect internal and external image of my body somehow. Go back and forth and relate those two. Internal imagery - kinesthetic feeling. Externally: more visual and looking. The picture you have of yourself from an external point of view. ... Maybe this way of externally seeing yourself is much more related to how you think other people watch you. When you do it internally you are more aware of your own feelings and what your body feels like.

There appeared to be a contradiction between Ingrid and Jane in that Ingrid was talking about being more aware of personal feelings, and to some degree this increase of internal awareness had been an aspect of feeling good about herself. Yet for Jane it was the leaving of personal awareness to a being outside herself which was the 'goodness', or at least a part of it. If both women are describing the same phenomenon for one it is internal, while for the other it is outside. And the unanswered question returns: outside of what?

Levels of Feeling Good

Both of the women indicated variations in states or levels in the feeling good about themselves, often linking the gradients with how long the feeling lasted. A short term experience was deemed to be of lesser importance or value as compared to those times which, upon recall, were experienced with as much power as when they had actually occurred. Indeed, this intensity of feeling upon remembering the particular time was a criteria for Jane. In her interview she brought out what the difference was for herself.

> Dancing. I love to dance. It gives me a good feeling because I love the music and the creativity of it. And then once the creativity happens with the movement it is just so beautiful. And it feels wonderful too. But it's not as long-lasting a feeling as those other times of real happiness that I get. It's like when you do a job and you do it really well and personally you feel proud of yourself and you feel happy about what you've done - but it's fleeting. I feel good for a moment and then 'But what does it really matter?' ... I get better feelings from these other things. It's a bigger feeling that when I think about it again it makes me happy about it all over again.

The feeling good from a sense of personal accomplishment was of less importance to Jane than the awe and joy she experienced in watching cedar waxwings dip and turn, in learning about the intelligence and kindness of dolphins, and in interacting with the "fascinating way of thinking" of others. Being aware of herself, either physically or in any other way, was perceived as part of a lesser feeling.

Ingrid likewise indicated that, for her, there were gradients in her sense of feeling good about herself. As she talked about the sense of being connected to "all parts of (her) body" she went on to describe an ongoing building upon that awareness for up to five years later. This experience was contrasted with times of achievement or positive feedback from others.

> Someone is being kind to me and I didn't expect it. Or I did something really well in sports. Those (moments)

are really short - five minutes and then
go back to normal.

As with Jane the experiences which are recognized by many psychologists as contributing to self-esteem - achievement, positive 'strokes' - are perceived by Ingrid as of less value than a sense of connection whose 'cause' is unclear.

The Basics

Although I found it difficult, if not impossible, to discover a specific cause/source for these times of feeling good about themselves from the women's descriptions, I realized that certain things had to be in place before the co-researchers could experience the senses of connection which were important to the phenomenon. Both Ingrid and Jane indicated that they had to be at a particular level relative to various aspects of themselves in order not to be distracted from feeling good. As mentioned earlier there was a sense of unconsciousness or even transcendence - a being unaware of the self during times of feeling good. Each of the co-researchers later brought out the fact that in order for this to happen they had to have a certain level of ability or understanding of the skills involved. In other words, they had to have moved past a level of skill ability which required them to concentrate on what they were doing.

The co-researchers indicated that they also needed to be beyond the basic level of physical fitness. Both Jane and Ingrid stated that they could only have been participating in some of the activities which they linked with feeling good because they had a high enough level of physical fitness. Jane brought this out relative to both her walk through the river valley and to her regularly cycling out to Elk Island park. It was being fit enough to do this which allowed her to go the distance and be in the outdoors in a way which she saw as important to her sense of feeling good. Ingrid realized that her sense of competency which was important to her feeling good about herself rested upon her ability to be active and strong.

For both of the women "being fit enough got (them) to the point where (they) were able to experience not even thinking about the body". Because their strength and cardio-vascular endurance was high they were able to not only participate in the activity, but to do so at a high skill level.

The co-researchers felt that they had previously developed their control and

awareness of their bodies to the extent that they could now not focus on them. When exploring with Jane the value of the physical self to times of feeling good I realized that - for her - she needed to "go in the direction of being aware of the body first". A basic level of focus and concentration was necessary in order to sufficiently 'learn' the skill in order to forget it. The work done at this basic level required an increasing awareness of the physical self - what actions were occurring, what internal and external feedback was being experienced, and therefore what refinement needed to be done. Without this concentration and awareness successful performance of the skill would have remained at an accidental state.

For Ingrid the term 'control' was especially relevant, as being able and in control was an important part of her self-image. When she was in the out-of-doors she tended to "forget more about (her) body". She could participate in the long hike she described because she had previously worked on being able to control her body in doing the skills required, and now could "forget" it. For both she and Jane "being fit enough and being body aware enough got (them) to the point where (they) were able to experience not even thinking about the body".

Jane brought out one more aspect which had to be present in order to move on - that of a healthy body image. For her "it is important to have a healthy body image so that (she) can enjoy - anything. Get out of (herself). Don't worry about it. Get beyond it". Grappling with what was meant by her regarding "healthy body image" did not lead to any clear definition, which was not surprising considering the lack of such as noted in the earlier chapter. The conclusion reached by Jane was a rather cyclic definition that a healthy body image was not visual, but rather was made up of the feeling of feeling good. This meant that in order to experience the getting out of herself which is integral to Jane's feeling good she must first feel good - that is, have a healthy body image.

Contrast

The individuality of the co-researchers was apparent in the differences which emerged in their descriptions. At times this appeared to be a difference in emphasis; at other times it was the highlighting of a concept omitted by the other.

Connection

The first and most obvious difference has already been mentioned in the introduction to 'Ingrid's Story'. Both of the women talked about an awareness of connection, but they contrasted in regards to what that connection was between. Jane found that, for her, a major aspect of feeling good was a sense of being part of and interacting with the world outside herself. Indeed, this dissolving of the outside/inside dichotomy was integral to the phenomenon. For Jane these times of connection involved a recognition of how amazing and magical was the world in which she lived. And therefore, as she was "being all part of that", she recognized something of herself that was amazing and magical as well. And that "gives (her) a good feeling about (her)self".

Ingrid's good feeling likewise involved connection, but with her it was a connection within, rather than a connection with what was without. As with Jane, this connecting involved a change in the perception of what was being connected. In her comments Ineka indicated that previous to the time of feeling good there had been parts of her body she did not want. For whatever reason she had rejected these parts, and apparently did so by isolating them from what was her. Her later comments gave rise to the hypothesis that at least part of the reason for this rejection was the lack of congruency that she felt with those parts and her preferred self-image. For whatever reason, at the times of feeling good which she described all of her was acceptable and whole. Nothing was isolated from the rest. All of the intraconnecting was complete. Because her physical self could therefore be connected with her preferred self-image - that self-image about which she felt good - she likewise felt good about herself.

Acceptance/Rejection

The difference which self-acceptance or rejection could make was illustrated in the two interviews. Ingrid talked about "being conscious of your body in a more positive way", and what that meant for her. Involved in her description was a sense of acceptance of all of her physical self. In her statement about being positive she acknowledged the possibility of different ways of being aware of one's body. This applied not only to the self-awareness and self-consciousness contrasts discussed earlier, but also to the positive and negative continuum, however that was interpreted. This is not necessarily referring to the half-

empty/half-full cup of the pessimist/optimist, but rather to an active pushing away or embracing of what is being considered. This self-acceptance or rejection, however, did not appear to be strictly an element of choice, as the phenomenon itself - the feeling good - appeared to elicit the positive. I found it difficult to see any causal relationship in this process. Was Ingrid more positively aware of her body because she accepted it, or did she accept it because she had a more positive awareness? This confusion as to which came first, if anything, appeared to be lacking in Jane's discussion of the impact of self-consciousness. She described how, in those situation, a negative perception of herself short-circuited the times in which she had begun to feel good about herself. That moment of rejection of thighs perceived as fat would "over-ride (her) ability to really enjoy situations that would otherwise make (her) feel good about (her)self". Her wording brought out the active impact of her chosen self-perception, and the passive acting upon her of the situation. Being in a particular environment with particular things occurring could 'cause' her to feel good about herself. At the same time seeing herself in a negative way could 'cause' her to interfere with the result of the first cause. Here, instead of 'this causes that' there are a number of variables impacting upon Jane's perception of herself and the extent to which she would allow the world about her to connect.

In Ingrid's description acceptance of her physical self, a positive awareness of it, and feeling good appeared to be one and the same. With Jane a negative awareness led to rejection of, at the least, part of her physical self and a stopping of a sense of feeling good. In the latter case there appeared to be more of a causal interaction than in the former situation.

Self-Image

The importance of self-image was brought out by both of the women. Ingrid described how, at times of feeling good, her perception of her body agreed with her picture of herself as an active and athletic individual. That image of herself had developed over the years, becoming stronger as she trained for various competitions. Again, the question of which came first reared its head. When she described her body in times of feeling good Ingrid referred to being strong, flexible, and energetic "because those are the things (she) trains on". Her selection of these elements to work on was, to a large extent, based upon the demands of the activity being undertaken. Her selection was also based upon what she

wanted to become - the self for which she was aiming. As her training resulted in the improvement of these elements the image of herself as having them correspondingly strengthened. The agreement between who she was and what she wanted to be was imbedded within the acceptance of herself which was basic to her sense of feeling good about herself.

Jane also talked about a change in self-image, both ideal and perceived. She indicated that "five or six years ago it would have been that being that skinny would have been really important for (her) sense of well-being, (her) feeling good about (her)self". She was looking for a "totally slim, svelte figure". Unlike Ingrid this desire did not emerge out of a functional requirement, such as improved health. Indeed, Jane noted that even when she was quite fit she was not the skinny person she wanted to be.

This lack of correlation with ideal and becoming may account for the rejection of her physical structure which Jane revealed in part of the interview. She indicated that she was learning to accept her present weight, but her body language and tone of voice indicated that this acceptance required a fair amount of energy and determination. Perhaps the acceptance and the corresponding sense of feeling good about herself would have come easier if her self-image had naturally emerged out of who she was and what she was doing, instead of, perhaps, out of a picture projected by society.

Elements Unique to Each Individual

As indicated at the start of this section there were a number of elements only mentioned by one or the other of the co-researchers. Jane described the importance of the physical senses and the criteria of repeatability. Ingrid referred to an attitude towards the future as she focused more specifically upon the body and body image in times of feeling good.

One of the reasons for the differences between the descriptions of the two co-researchers may lie in the questions involved in the interviews themselves. Jane's descriptions of feeling good initially did not appear to be referring to feeling good about herself as much as to the sense of feeling good, period. For this reason I thought it important to directly elicit what was occurring in herself at these times. This approach resulted in a description which indicated an apparent non-involvement of the physical self,

in that at times of feeling good she was unaware of herself. Jane was therefore asked directly:

> What if the body wasn't there - would you
> still feel right about yourself in these
> experiences? Does the body have anything
> to do with these experiences?

This question focussed her specifically on her body, something which may not - in fact, probably would not - have otherwise happened. With this deliberate focus Jane brought out how important it was to her to have a body in order to physically feel, see, hear and taste the elements of the environment in which she experienced the sense of feeling good. Without the physical self there to interact with the environment such experiencing would not be possible. For Jane it was important to be:

> physically feeling the elements ...
> facing something huge,natural. ...
> So in that sense (feeling good) had
> a lot to do with the body.

One other aspect mentioned only by Jane was that of the criteria of repeatability. As mentioned in the section under 'Similarities', both co-researchers felt that there were various levels in the phenomenon of feeling good. For Jane one way of knowing that she was describing/experiencing the "bigger feeling" of feeling good was to be able to re-experience the sensations involved when talking or thinking about that time. In Jane's description it was only the more intense levels of the experience that really brought about the same reaction, in that "when (she) thought about it again it makes (her) happy about it all over again".

Ingrid was unique in bringing out the idea that times of feeling good affected her so that she would have "the feeling that it is going to be well in the future - the near future". She became aware that part of feeling good for her was the sense that she was "on the right track", and therefore what would happen in the future would also be good. This idea only emerged at the beginning of the interview, remaining undeveloped by either Ingrid or myself in any follow-up.

Reflections on 'Feeling Good'

Process

As the interviews unfolded a number of questions and concerns arose regarding the actual process and procedure which was implemented in the study. The continuous action of bracketing revealed that I was often caught up in the Cartesian split-world view which I thought I had rejected. Seeking to find the best way to probe the phenomenon of feeling good about oneself was a constant challenge.

Analytical Mode

At times in the interview a more analytical mode was engaged in by the participants. Various qualitative researchers had warned against analyzing within the interview session (Pockinghorne, 1981; vanManen, personal communication). As both co-researchers and myself were graduate students it was difficult to not employ the analytical method of thinking which is so basic to that occupation. Becker (1986) appeared to indicate that some qualitative researchers allowed a certain degree of analysis. These individuals see:

> ... the interview as a cooperative dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. ... Description from the subject is sought, but interviews also include descriptions from the researcher's experiences of the phenomenon. As interviewing progresses, interpretations also become part of the interview dialogue. (p.109)

The one difficulty which was seen in entering into interpretation with the co-researchers in the interview itself was that doing so removed the speaker from the actual experiencing of the phenomenon. No longer was the co-researcher recalling with her whole self a time of feeling good, but she had removed herself out of the situation, and so what was being recalled was no longer the same. The material presented became abstract and generalized to such a degree that, at times, it was difficult to pull out any detail. Also, the reversion to analysis was often based upon stereotypical concepts. As mentioned earlier, I had attempted to open myself to the process of bracketing prior to and throughout the research. The analytical mode, employed too soon, short-circuited this process for both myself and the co-researcher. As the studies continued the my ability to listen and encourage description rather than analysis improved. I discovered that the experiencing and

description of the phenomenon by the co-researchers had a parallel improvement, even in the single interview session.

Bracketing

The need to constantly check for and put aside preconceptions was highlighted in the interview with Jane. Much of my work was focused on helping others become aware of their bodies while moving. In so doing I had discovered that encouraging a particular type of awareness seemed to result in a positive feeling towards oneself. Without realizing it, I had drawn a corollary in my thinking: in times of positively experiencing oneself this same type of awareness of the body would be present. When Jane did not spontaneously describe how she experienced her body in times of feeling good about herself I presentated leading questions in order to prompt what I believed should be present in such times. In qualitative research of this nature such leading questions are not to be introduced into the interview situation (Becker,1986; Polkinhorne,1981; vanManen,private correspondence). These questions did, however, appear to prompt greater detail from the co-researcher regarding her description of the phenomenon.

Language

There was a great difficulty on the part of the co-researchers regarding trying to put into words the experiences being explored. One example of this was how both Jane and Ingrid referred to their bodies as 'it', as if indicating an object separate from themselves. Yet they also talked about themselves being fat or competent. At least two things might have been happening which might explain this apparent discrepancy.

Possibly the co-researchers moved in and out of two modes of consciousness of their physical selves; that of being their bodies and that of having their bodies. At times in their recalling of who and what they were there was simply one cohesive being. At other times they 'saw' a self and a body, with differences in the relationship between the two. This change in relationship was seen in both Jane and Ingrid as they moved from rejecting at least a part of their physical self, to caring for and training 'it'. Who the 'self' was in this relationship was not clear to the co-researchers, but for this type of consciousness there seemed to be a need for the separation indicated.

That 'need' may also be present because of the dictates of the English language itself.

> The tags are ready that would consign one's experience to an old banality. We are a culture consumed by verbalism, and the effect of our words is to place a screen between us and things.
> (Barrett,1979,p.370)

Once a name is assigned that which has the name becomes a thing, and as expressed above there is a distance "between us and things" created in this naming. This is even more true of the Western culture as the language of the naming developed within the quantitative, Cartesian understanding of the world which had infiltrated every aspect of society. Not surprisingly, the English language itself is one of separation, of causality, and of control.

But as outlined in the first chapter, the phenomenon being explored in this study is not one which fits into the linear thinking of the Cartesian model. It would be more appropriate to place 'feeling good about yourself' within the science of chaos. And as such: "we could not say of a nonlogical world what it would be like, because our saying would be language, and language must be logically articulated to some minimal degree at least" (Barrett,1979,p.48). Yet to some extent we must 'say' what it would be like, for it is through this language that we, to a large extent, communicate with one another. For anyone reading this material, for example, there are only the words of the English language with which to relate. Even the non-verbal cues of in-person dialogue are missing. "Language is the only way by which we can bring ... experience into a symbolic form that creates by its very discursive nature a conversational relation" (van Manen,1989,p.107).

Therefore, understanding how language is learned is important.

> The employment of language ... does not appear to be founded on the exercise of pure intelligence but instead on a more obscure operation - namely, the child's assimilation of the linguistic system of his environment in a way that is comparable to the acquisition of any habit whatsoever: the learning of a structure of conduct.
> (Merleau-Ponty,1964,p.99)

So the habits of referring to the body as an 'it' which developed because of the Cartesian split-world view continue even when what is being described is a wholeness of

being/feeling good.

> It is fascinating to note that in Hebrew there is no term to designate the physical body exclusively. In Hebrew ... the word basar, usually translated as 'flesh' or 'body', means the whole person. Nephesh, commonly translated as soul, means the same thing. So the words that have come to us in English as body and soul did not originally have separate meanings. Both words denote the whole person.
> (Larson,1978,p.124f)

The Self

Many questions emerged from the content of the descriptive material provided by the co-researchers. A common root for some of these questions was the concept of 'self'. This was alluded to in the previous section when discussing how the women were talking about a relationship with their selves and their bodies. Who and what was this self to which they referred?

One of the writers who spoke clearly to this issue was Calvin Schrag (1962). In relating to Merleau-Ponty's 'preobjective world' Schrag stated that from that understanding:

> The phenomenon in question is my body as concretely lived. The body as immediately apprehended is not a corporeal substance which is in some way attached to, or united with, another substance, variously called in the tradition a 'soul', 'mind', or 'self'. (p.156)

From his description above the following comment which came from Ingrid in the interview did not make sense.

> I felt more connected to my body. It was there and I was in it.

If Schrag (and the Hebrews, as indicated in their language) are correct, the body as lived is not connected to a person. Neither is the self "in it". How could Ingrid feel herself as connected to her body, herself in her body? Again, from Schrag:

> The body is myself in my lived concreteness. It is who I am, and indicates the manner in which I am. (IBID,p.157)

Perhaps in her description above Ingrid was struggling with the problem of language as mentioned earlier. Or she may have been in transition between the "body as concretely lived ... (as) contrasted with the body as objectively known" (Schrag,1962,p.156). The latter understanding of the body is that which is common to the fields of anatomy and physiology, as well as to that of physical education. As both a physical educator and an athlete Ingrid was trained to think of her body in an objective manner, even more so than the average person. In the times of feeling good which she was recalling perhaps Ingrid was returning to her original state in which she experienced her body "first as a complex of life-movements which are indistinguishable from (her) experience of self" (Schrag,1962,p.156).

This concept of a return to her original state might also enter into a sense of ownership which Ingrid had revealed when she had suggested that "when you are aware internally you are more aware of your own feelings and what your body feels like". The envelope of one's physical self is available to those around as far as what that self looks and moves like. But the body as lived can only be known by the person herself. Allowing herself to be her body as lived meant that Ingrid was internally aware, and in that awareness she knew her emotions and her experiencing of herself as only she could. No one else can rightly claim to know how a person feels inside. The outside world is precisely that - outside. And that is why body image exists in another understanding than body feeling. The latter belongs totally to 'me', whereas body image is shared with others in how they see me, or how I perceive they see me. "The lived body ... signifies a mode of orientation rather than a conceptualized entity" (Schrag,1962,p.156) such as body image.

Self-Acceptance

The sense of ownership referred to above contributes to and is dependent on how a person feels about herself. In the feeling good about herself Ingrid could become more internally aware of how she felt. And in that feeling good something was missing. That something was the sense of rejection of parts of her body that was part of her normal state. Ingrid normally felt that there were parts of her body that she didn't want. That 'not wanting' was often seen in many of the my clients, and had provided one of the main motivations for these studies. A common statement heard in fitness classes was: 'If I could just do something about these saddlebags'. Or 'my stomach'. Or 'my fat legs'.

Rejection of parts of the body was also a finding in the research on body image. In

his review of the studies done in this area Fisher (1986) noted the finding of "the unusual amount of dissatisfaction that females, beginning even in adolescence, feel with respect to the waist-hip-thigh region, and relatedly, to their overall weight" (p.124). This dissatisfaction, apparently, has increased over the years. Cash and associates (1985) found that the women in a 1985 study showed a greater dissatisfaction relative to weight, muscle tone and their lower torso than was found in a study some twelve years earlier (Berscheid et al,1973). In agreement with this was the fact that it was her thighs that Jane focused on as being fat when she was self-conscious. Ingrid, on the other hand, had not mentioned specifically which parts of her body she had not wanted.

What was clear was that this seemingly normal state of rejection of body parts was absent in the time of feeling good. Instead Ingrid experienced her body as being "more complete". Might this mean that rejection and partialness are interrelated? That is, when we perceive ourselves as complete do we perceive ourselves in the mode of 'feeling good'? And if this is so, might it also be true that looking at ourselves as made up of parts, as often done in our dualistic society, and as revealed in natural science research - might this division into parts lead to and/or reinforce a sense of rejection?

In saying that her body was "completely there" in the time of feeling good about herself Ingrid intimated that the body was also completely accepted. As indicated in the section 'Contrast', one of the reasons Ineka could experience the intraconnection which she saw as integral to her times of feeling good about herself was that there had been a change in perception of those aspects being connected. We do not willingly make contact with someone whom we do not like and/or trust. There must be a sense that this other is acceptable to us. And if deeper contact is to occur there is also a need to be able to trust the other, to know that they can be counted on. Ingrid brought this out when she was talking about being conscious of her body in a positive way. "You feel that it supports your being, your performance". In this time of feeling good there was no need to reject any part of her body because it was all there behind her. Again, there is still the sense of separation in this concept, whether due to language or perception. What is apparently different from the Ingrid's normal state is that the not wanting certain body parts was not there because, within the phenomenon being considered, all of the body was seen as being supportive of what was desired.

This concept may be a contributing factor in the relatively consistent findings that

"athletes seem to experience higher body esteem than do nonathletes" (Fisher,1986,p.141). While in training athletes time and again make demands upon their bodies which are consistently met. Through experience the athletes have learned that they can count on their bodies to support their performance. They know that through their training they are at an overall fitness level which allows them to do that which is important to them.

They can trust their bodies. Yet that very trust places them in a vulnerable position, because what they most want to do is based upon a relatively fragile aspect of themselves. The "body becomes ... object of ambivalent investment, loved as a carrier of success, of 'good things', but at the same time opposed as a continual source of worry and alarm about its functioning" (from Conforto and Marcenaro's 1979 study, as cited in Fisher,1986,p.145). When interviewed again for Study III Ingrid revealed this 'worry and alarm' state as well.

Not only did Ingrid experience her body supporting her in her performance but she also saw it as being congruent with her perception of herself, as she desired to be. As discussed in the section 'Contrasts', Ingrid had wanted to be an active, strong person, and at the time being remembered as feeling good that is how she saw herself. Because of the training and general lifestyle in which she was involved she felt that she was fit, and that was the way she wanted to be. As far as Ingrid was concerned, what 'was' matched with what 'was wanted'. In a follow-up interview Ingrid spoke more to this sense of self-acceptance.

> It is hard to remember exactly what the relationship between myself and my body was before the summer (recalled), but I do remember this change, a change in awareness of how my body felt, how much of my body I could feel - more - and also more accepting of it, the way it was. And I know this feeling carried over into the way I carried myself, with the self-awareness of acceptance. 'Yes, this is me. And this is totally me'.

When Jane felt that her self-consciousness blocked her feeling good about herself, it was because in that awareness she did not feel the matching which Ingrid described. She wanted to be a certain way which she knew she was not. Even as she recognized that her natural build was "hefty" she desired to be svelte instead. Jane could not feel good about herself as long as there was this discrepancy in her perception between what 'was' and what 'was wanted'. In order for her to feel good one or the other would have to change, or there

would need to be changes in both so that they could move towards each other until the match was made.

Others

Why was it that, in times of self-consciousness, Jane was unable to want what she was? Various researchers in the area contend that this desire for thinness is based not upon the needs of the individual, but upon the imposition of cultural and societal demands (Spignesi,1983, Steinem,1992, Szekely,1988, Wolf,1991). Wolf (1991) graphically referred to those demands as belonging to a beauty myth which is the modern-day Iron Maiden.

> The modern hallucination in which women are trapped or trap themselves is similarly rigid, cruel and euphemistically painted. Contemporary culture directs attention to imagery of the Iron Maiden, while censoring real women's faces and bodies (p.17).

This picture, as dramatic as it is, did appear to apply to Jane in her rejection of herself in times of self-consciousness, as compared to those times of feeling good about herself. The image of herself which Jane wanted was somewhat externally controlled and motivated. This image did not fall within the parameters of what she was doing and becoming, but instead was geared towards an 'ideal' self unconnected to her person. Even if she had managed to become that svelte person she thought she wanted to be, Jane may still not have experienced the congruency with self which Ingrid described. Ingrid had adjusted her self-image as she improved in her physical abilities. What she was becoming also became what she wanted to be. The adjustments were linked with what was actually occurring. But in times of self-consciousness Jane had made no corresponding changes in her desired self. She apparently had accepted the 'Iron Maiden' image of thinness imposed by society. Even though she had developed and changed - with an improvement in fitness level, for example - no adjustments had been made in her ideal body image. As mentioned earlier, she appeared to be focused on "a conceptualized entity" (Schrag,1962,p.156) rather than her body as lived. Perhaps acceptance of her body parts and a corresponding sense of feeling good about herself would have been more natural for Jane if her self-image had emerged out of who she was and what she was doing instead of out of a picture presented by society.

Ingrid also seemed to be caught up in society's demand for slimness, in that she

mentioned it as a "major component" of times when she felt good about her body. Further reflection suggested an alternative explanation. One of the elements of physical fitness is body composition. By this is meant the ratio of lean to fat tissue (Holloway,1985). As a person becomes more active she tends to burn up fat tissues and increase the amount of muscle tissue, and therefore the body composition changes. One way in which this change is recognized is in the person's build. She often appears slimmer than before becoming so active. This type of change is especially seen when one engages in a high level of activity such as Ingrid was involved in at the time being recalled. When she commented on her slimness as being important to her she may simply have been referring to this recognition that she was becoming more physically fit, and not that she was fitting into the 'Iron Maiden'.

In actuality, in times of feeling good about oneself the opinions of others did not seem to matter so much. In fact, I was surprised at how little mention of others there was in the description of the phenomenon. There did appear to be a paradox with Ingrid relative to the effect of others on her self-perception. At one time she said that feeling good meant that she was not "limited by other people", and at another time she stated that "when people react to me in a nice way I feel good about myself".

This difference may be the one between core and situational self-esteem (Steinem,1992). Core self-esteem is described as a "conviction of being loved and lovable, valued and valuable as we are, regardless of what we do" (Steinem,1992,p.66). This is the initial sense of ourselves that we apparently have as very young children. In our total dependency on others we accept that they take care of us regardless of our behavior - just because. As we get older we become aware that our acceptance by others is often contingent upon their expectations of us and how we measure up to them. Our self-esteem is therefore affected by the situation. Steinem proposed that, if core self-esteem is strong the impact of the opinions of others is less important and lasts for a shorter period of time. This appeared to agree with Ingrid's description. Although she recognized that people being nice to her did contribute to her sense of feeling good about herself, she did not see it as affecting her at a very deep level or in a long-lasting manner. The sense of independence, of being free of the restrictions of those around her, appeared to be more integral to her sense of feeling good about herself. Her core self-esteem at those times was such that she could enjoy her own self apart from the demands of others.

Both women made a point of mentioning that self-consciousness was not within the phenomenon of feeling good about themselves. In so doing they indicated a movement amongst Sartre's three dimensions of the body. In his treatise on the body Sartre (1953) stated that the being of the body is always in relation to the world. In being-for-itself the body is transcended in being a landscape for movement. This relates to the co-researchers', especially Jane's, indication that they were unaware of themselves in the times of feeling good. The body had been "forgotten". "The body is lived, and not known" (Sartre,1953,p.427). In his body-for-Others the body becomes an object which can be seen by others and which the individual herself can partially see and touch. This is the anatomical and physiological body as objectively known, as discussed earlier.

The third dimension of the body, according to Sartre, is that mode of being which the women appeared to be describing when they talked about being self-conscious. In this mode the individual becomes aware that she is being seen by Others. According to Sartre this awareness of the Other's look prompts a feeling of shame. This did appear to be an aspect of Jane's response when she was asked how she thought others might perceive her in times of feeling good. The sense of alienation begun in the second dimension was increased.

To Sartre the being-for-Others was a a necessary precursor to the being-for-self. The prereflectiveness of the first dimension was the body-as-subject. When the body became an object, as in the second and third dimensions, there had to be another subject, and that subject was the look of the Other.

> Either (the body) is a thing among other things,
> or else it is that by which things are revealed
> to me. But it cannot be both at the same time.
> (Sartre,1953,p.403)

The descriptions in this study indicate that in times of a high level of feeling good about oneself one is in the first dimension of the ontology of the body, the body-as-subject. And therefore self-consciousness, as seen in the second and third dimensions, could not be present. The absence of self-consciousness would therefore be a mark of times of feeling good about oneself.

Awareness

The impact of being conscious of the self as described above was also noticed in natural science research on body image. In efforts to determine how self-awareness affected behavior a number of researchers investigated "the impact of being exposed to one's mirror image" (Fisher,1986,p.11), with later studies also including audio- and videotaped feedback of the individual. Three major effects of such self-focus were noticed. The first, rather obvious, effect was that the subjects became more aware of the 'I', seeing themselves as central to the testing situation. This was also shown in a "greater awareness of one's own emotions and inner feelings" (IBID,p.12), and apparently in a more accurate manner.

A second effect which was noticed was that when individuals focused upon themselves there was a drop in self-esteem. There did appear to be some connection of this drop with the individual's perception of how they were seen.

> ... several studies have demonstrated that in situation in which people feel disapproved, they are likely to avoid exposure ... that intensifies self-awareness. On the other hand, when persons are given positive, laudatory information about themselves, mirror exposure may magnify positive effects on self-esteem.
> (Fisher,1986,p.13)

This analysis corresponds with the situational self-esteem described by Steinem (1992). Would an individual with a high core self-esteem require the external feedback of others to experience the magnified positive effects?

"The third and perhaps most important consequence of magnifying self-awareness through a mirror experience is increased conformity to the prevailing standard" (Fisher,1986,p.13). This was definitely noticed in Jane's response to the question of how she thought others might see her. When focused upon herself in this way she appeared to relate to the cultural standards of thinness for women as those which she had for herself. Her body language bespoke a drop in self-esteem as she perceived herself falling short of those standards. At that moment in time the appropriateness of the standards, both in general and as applied to her, were not questioned. They were the way it was to be, and the way that she was not.

The above findings on the impact of such self-focusing brings into debate much of the testing which has been done on body image. If becoming the central focus reduces self-

esteem and reinforces cultural standards then procedures requiring this self-focus will probably have this result. If a person is asked to judge the widths of different parts of her body, or respond to a questionnaire that asks her to focus on her physical self, or draw pictures of her own body - is she not being asked to become self-conscious? The corresponding negative feelings about the self are not, therefore, surprising.

A Type of Awareness

Does this mean that all such focusing will have this impact? It is important to remember that it was the specular image - that is, the reflection of oneself in a mirror (Merleau-Ponty, 1964) - which was being considered in the above-mentioned research. In his development of this concept Merleau-Ponty pointed out that the:

> ...specular image makes possible a sort of alienation. I am no longer what I felt myself, immediately, to be; I am that image of myself that is offered up by the mirror.... In this sense I am torn from myself. (p.136)

What if the self-focus was not stimulated by external feedback, but was based upon a growing awareness of self from within? One possible value of this approach might be the creation/recognition of personal standards rather than those of the external world. If at the same time this body awareness was encouraged to occur in a neutral manner, as if another was being considered, what might be the impact upon self-esteem? This type of body awareness is central to my own work, under the label of Relaxercise. In Relaxercise the participant is asked to do simple repetitive movement patterns designed to facilitate the range of motion of major joints, while at the same time incorporating certain breathing foci. At times different images are proposed to assist the participant's implementing of the directions. Central to the work is a focusing upon the self in a particular manner.

> ... an objectivity of awareness ... I ask you to 'see', 'watch', 'hear', and 'listen to' your body's responses as if they were outside of yourself. At this time I am asking for two things:
>
> a. that your mind's eye/ear/sense of touch perceive what is happening, not the actual organs themselves, and
> b. that you become aware of these things without making value judgements, as if

> they were happening in someone else.
> You become an objective observer.
> (Kennedy,1988,p.6)

I found in the Relaxercise work that, when a person had been able to objectively attend to her physical self in the manner encouraged above, there was often the same sense of amazement and delight which had been described by Jane in the first part of her interview. An important feature of the awareness which is encouraged in Relaxercise is that the directions are neither positively or negatively keyed. The participants are simply asked to pay attention. When they are able to be an "objective observer" of themselves they 'find' something which is delightful. Perhaps in this focus the awareness is not of 'me', but of the created being of myself?

In a time of exploring native healing the group in which I was a member was directed to try personal affirmations; for example, stating 'I am strong'. The leader of the session recognized that for some of us such affirmations were very difficult to do. He therefore suggested that we begin the affirmation with 'As the Creator has made me I am ...' (Lane,1989). This approach appeared to open up the process not only for myself but for many others in the group. Perhaps this is the same type of objective awareness which I have been encouraging in the Relaxercise sessions. What is not clear was why this apparent removal of self lead to such positive awareness of self. Perhaps we can accept the Creator's goodness before we can accept our own?

The Forgotten Body

Jane had talked about being aware of the natural elements through "physically feeling" them, and how that had been part of her experience of feeling good about herself. Reflecting upon her description helped to clarify why the body and personal movement were not specifically mentioned in the descriptions of times of feeling good. What needed to be present physically - one's body - was so basic to who the women were that it was not present at a conscious level.

> My body is the primal condition for the existence
> of the objective,physico-cultural world (it is,
> as Marcel says, the 'landmark' of all existence),
> in the sense that it is the 'that by means of which'
> there is a world and objects in the first place. My
> body, as Sartre stresses, is the operational center,

> 0, in terms of which the world and its multiple objects are structured and organized. ... My body proper is a synthetically organized system of organs, having multiple fields of sensation ... each of which has its own intrinsic organization and its own specific functional place in the total system of the body proper.
> (Zaner,1971,p.250)

In this first dimension of the body-for-itself (Sartre, 1953) there is not a conscious awareness of the body, but rather an awareness of what the body is seeing, or touching, or hearing. The body is passed over, or forgotten.

Levels of Awareness

As indicated in the 'stories' of the two co-researchers, there appeared to be a certain level of ability needed in order to be free to 'forget' the body. In many ways their descriptions were similiar to the four stages of movement skill proficiency outlined by Graham and associates(1980).

1. Precontrol level: successful skill performances are accidents, characterized more by surprise than expectancy.
2. Control level; often involves intense concentration because the movements are far from automatic. Movements are more consistent, and repetitions are somewhat alike.
3. Utilization level: increasingly automatic movements. The performer has developed control of the skill in predictable situations. She can use the skill in combination with other skills.
4. Proficiency level: the skill has become almost automatic. The movement can be performed successfully in a variety of planned and unplanned situations.
(excerpts from Graham et al,1980,p.38ff)

In order for Jane to be able to be unaware of herself when she was walking or cycling she needed to be at the proficiency level of the skills. Only then would her performance be automatic enough to release her from the need to concentrate on how the skills were to be done. When she was that proficient it would be possible to be unaware of herself in the way which she described in the times of feeling good.

Nature

Both of the co-researchers, but especially Jane, highlighted how being in a natural environment seemed to contribute towards their feeling good about themselves. For Jane nature stimulated awe, delight and amazement. She found herself on a type of 'high'. This type of response was not unique to this co-researcher.

> Diane Ackerman, a naturalist, explorer, poet,
> ... describes the 'visual opium' of watching
> the sun go down through a picture window:
> "Each night the sunset surged with purple
> pampas-grass plumes, and shot fuchsia rockets
> into the pink sky, then deepened through folded
> layers of peacock green to all the blues of
> India and a black across which clouds sometimes
> churned like alabaster dolls.
> (Steinem,1992,p.297)

There is an order, a rightness about what is perceived which speaks to the perceiver. Jane talked about the "magic" of the ceder waxwings flying in formation and then turning at the same time. She was amazed at reading about the intelligence of the dolphins. She was delighted with what was there and how together it all was. There is something about this nebulous thing we call 'nature' which prompts certain feelings.

Those feelings will not always be positively perceived by an individual. In exploring her own responses Steinem (1992) had noted that: "most people have some early association that either attracts them or drives them away from nature" (p.288). Yet even though she had personally felt more drawn to cities because of her childhood experiences, she also realized that there were some natural settings which profoundly affected her. One element of nature which moved her powerfully was the ocean. Her explanation was that:

> Standing at the edge of this mysterious three
> fourths of the planet from which we all evolved,
> we feel returned to some authentic, calming,
> inner core of ourselves, as if the mere sight of
> it could wash away all artifice and confusion.
> (IBID,p.289)

In a study of university students taking part in a weekend wilderness experience the co-researchers there also indicated a returning to their "inner core", their natural selves (Potter,1993). As described by two of the co-researchers: "It's good to feel pure and natural" (p.138), "I feel so natural; I feel bare" (p.124).

One of the themes which emerged from Potter's (1993) study was an appreciation of nature. In the descriptions provided by the participants nature was credited with having certain desirable qualities.

> Nature is peace. I realized how much I truly respect nature's abilities, the beauty, the peacefulness and the purity. I feel in love with the outdoors. (p.137)

> The simplicity of nature and honesty of nature - no competition, no hidden agendas. Nature is just what it is - honest, simple. (p.149)

And it was this appreciated, amazing nature which, in the times of feeling good about themselves, the co-researchers not only enjoyed but also saw themselves as "being part of all that". So the experience was not only positive because of being in a natural setting which was awe-ful and amazing, but also because of the being part of and connected to all that goodness.

QUESTIONS

In this second study thirteen questions were prepared to guide the co-researchers in discussing specific aspects of their physical selves. These questions asked about definitions of body image, perceptions of self-shape and self-movement, supposed perceptions by others of the same things, and one's relationship to her physical self (Appendix A). An effort was made to tap the more creative, abstract aspects of the brain through somewhat metaphorical questions, for example: "If you chose to compare yourself to an animal which one would you chose, and why?" It was hoped that qualitative aspects of body image could be brought forward in this way. Five women were interviewed.

Responses to the Questions

There was much variety in the responses by the co-researchers, yet some commonalities did emerge. As will be discussed later the type of questions employed in this study prompted shorter and more analytical responses than was found in the first study. In many ways the responses pointed not towards clarification, but towards the engendering of more questions. The commonalities and the engendered questions fell into broad categories of changes in self-perception, what is important - including the importance of the body itself, and the recognition of different dimensions and factors of the physical self. There were also interesting comments regarding what was seen as a healthy body image.

Changes?

The issue of whether self-perception, particularly relative to body image, was a 'state' or 'trait' characteristic emerged in one form or the other in every interview. Three of the women identified their perceptions of their physical selves with specific times or feelings in their lives, and these perceptions remained basically unchanged. The aspect of memories of other ways of being also came into play. Yet in respect to how they saw themselves moving, or their carriage, the women often used terms such as "it depends", or "it varies". I found it difficult, therefore, to come up with any definitive statement on the issue.

Unchanged

The following comments were responses to the question of whether or not the co-researchers' picture of and/or relationship to their bodies had changed over the years.

> I don't see my physical self as any different from the way I used to be. I don't feel the way I look. I still feel the way I felt when I was thirty years younger. I still feel like the same person who is coming with a purpose and I know what I am doing and how I am going to do it. (Fern)

> I have a mind-set in that I think of myself as I was when I was about twenty-seven. I don't really feel like it changed. (Gay)

> I still feel like a six-year old, a ten-year old, a seventeen-year old; the same fibre, tenacity, strength is there. (Ena)

For these three women their picture of and relationship to their bodies had not changed. Fern and Gay had specific times in their lives during which their perceptions of their physical self had set, coalesced into a stable form which was relatively unaffected by following circumstances. Changes in their physical selves which they could acknowledge intellectually - (eg) "Since that time I have gained weight and I am sure I am very much different than I was" (Gay) - had not impacted enough to affect how they saw themselves in the present tense. Fern's "thirty years younger" was somewhat later in life than Gay's "twenty-seven", but that may have been simply a result of a generalization as compared to mentioning a specific period. In actuality Fern's time of image 'setting' might have been close to Gay's, and for some of the same reasons.

> I'm not sure what it is about the age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight that makes me think of myself still at that age. Probably I was still in college then and I guess that I felt that I was finally getting to be grown up. My picture of my body hasn't changed then, because I still see myself that way. (Gay)

For Gay it was around this time of "getting to be grown up" that she established a sense of who she was in all her aspects, including who she was in her body. At this time in

her life, in both her maturity and her circumstances, she could apperceive her own self[1]. Jean, in contrast, was in her early twenties, and was continuing a stringent study/academic learning schedule which left her little time for the mental activity of apperception relative to herself. In response to the same question as to whether or not there had been changes in her picture of and relationship to her body Jean stated:

> Yes. Every once in a while I will look in the mirror and think I look good or pretty. I never used to do that before.

Not only was Jean's perception of herself changing, but it appeared to be shifting in that change towards a more positive view of herself. The material presented by Gay and Fern suggested that this positive perspective was a necessary aspect of the apperception process. The bringing to awareness of the subconscious aspects of the physical self could not really occur until some sense of acceptance was present. Both Gay and Fern indicated elsewhere in their interviews that the self-sense to which they still identified relative to their physical nature included an element of being what they wanted to be, and therefore there was acceptance of that self. I came to this understanding when comparing how the women related to the self as now seen in the mirror with the self-perception based on the earlier time. As will be discussed in more detail later, the 'real' image of now jarred with the established body image. There was a form of rejection of what was the 'now', indicating that what was in 'past' was not rejected, but wanted. This appeared to make common sense in that wanting what is - i.e. accepting it - would seem integral to the adoption of a self-image. That is, if the body image was unwanted and therefore unacceptable, it would not be claimed as belonging to the self. In this discussion the focus is on the image or self-perception, not the actual 'facts' of weight, size and/or structure. The co-researchers may have an image which was acceptable to them, even if the actual structure was not, or visa-versa.

The establishment, if it can be called that, of a body image can therefore not occur until the person has reached some sense of ownership of their image, which would seem to indicate a likewise sense of acceptance, of wanting.

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[1]"apperception: the mental activity which (a) brings faint items of knowledge ... out of the subconscious to the level of conscious attention and which (b) puts them into intellectual patterns, thereby making sense of them" (Angeles,1981.p.16).

A recent conversation with a woman in her mid- to late-forties spoke to this need for self-acceptance, while clarifying what may actually be that which is accepted. Heather recalled her childhood self as a fat child, but that perception of herself apparently did not extend beyond her younger years. However, when seeing a doctor regarding a sleep deprivation problem, she was asked how she saw herself now. In reply she compared herself to a St. Bernard - slow, lumbering, gentle. For her this image was a positive one which she enjoyed having. Later in the conversation with myself she brought forth two other images. In spite of her slim build she saw herself as a "Russian peasant" or "an Italian woman stomping grapes". Perhaps because of her artistic nature she tended to speak metaphorically. Such metaphors tempted a superficial interpretation of saying that she was describing her physical structure, and that she was inaccurate in doing so. But as with most metaphors the meaning goes deeper than the surface of the skin. The aspects which Heather was bringing out in her descriptions of herself were less relevant to her physical structure, and more indicative of what mattered to her spirit. The aspect of deliberate gentle slowness and taking care of others brought out in her metaphor of the St. Bernard had continued to be important to her in her dealings with others. The dependability, strength and solidness of the European women with whom she identified - those qualities were ones which she not only desired, but saw herself as having, as part of her self-image. The issue was not how broad her shoulders structurally were, but how she felt about 'carrying the world' on them, including how well she thought she did it.

The spiritual element highlighted by Heather was also alluded to in both Fern's and Elsie's comments quoted at the beginning of this section. Fern referred to being "the same person who is coming with a purpose". Elsie talked about having "the same fibre - tenacity - strength". And for each of these women purpose and strength were important ingredients in their self-image. These ingredients were incarnated for them in such a way that they were identified within what they called their body image. Whether or not Elsie would emerge as a physically strong person if measured by items in a fitness test was inconsequential. Just as it did not matter if Heather was slim yet saw herself as sturdy. Although the descriptions appeared to be only about the physical self further digging unearthed the idea that the women were actually talking about a self-image which was projected unto a body image. Or perhaps self- and body-image were so integrated that they were one and the same thing.

The building up or evolving of such a sense of self requires time and experience. How much of each was probably individually based, yet there appeared to be a difference in Gay's remembered twenty-seven year old self and Jean's young twenty-one year old being, indicating that the twenties may be an important time of consolidation relative to how one perceives herself. These years may be an important pivotal time in the development and emergence of an individual spirit.

This discussion appears to indicate that body image is a trait characteristic which develops over a period of time and remains relatively durable once it is established. This would seem especially true relative to weight and aspects of personality identified with the structure of the body.

Changes

There were other elements of body image which, unlike those mentioned above, appeared open to the influences of daily living. Responses to the questions regarding describing oneself moving and one's carriage often included the terms 'it depends' or 'it varies'.

> That varies a lot from day to day. Should I answer when I am in peak physical form or should I answer when I am tired? When I am teaching at the university and doing warm-ups three times a week because of my classes I move much more gracefully. It is a direct relationship to the warm-ups that I do. When I'm not teaching I don't do the warm-ups ... and so the other extreme would be sluggishness. Actually it is probably a medium in between. When I am working and have a lot to do I tend to be much more energetic. When I have the minimum of responsibilities and lots of free time I move slower and not quite as energetic. (Gay)

> Carriage: it varies. If I do all my exercises I tend to carry myself very erect, well-placed. If I haven't I slouch more. If I am feeling really healthy and happy I am again much better placed than if I am feeling miserable. Then I slouch. It varies between the two. (Gay)

> It would depend on what I was doing. If I was bogged down by studies I would probably look

like I was ... tired or whatever. (Jean)

I know that when I'm dressed up I carry myself much better. (Jean)

It depends. Sometimes I feel myself click in to a congruency that becomes harmonious. My head is held higher - does it by itself. My shoulders are back and relaxed. And my body swings easily and I feel I could walk for a long time without fatigue. I notice this happens after a situation where I have been part of something growth-enhancing - for example, being part of a seminar where we are being enlightened together. (Elsie)

Tall, but stiff when I'm preoccupied. I'm surprised at how often I'm unnatural - my head leading my body, my jaw set - on my way to somewhere. I don't move for the enjoyment of moving anymore. (Elsie)

For Gay and Jean and Elsie how they perceived themselves moving and carrying themselves varied according to what they were involved with over a period of time or at that particular moment. For Gay it depended upon whether or not she was doing her warm-up exercises for drama class, and how busy she was at that point in her life. She appeared to link this with whether or not she was healthy and "in peak physical form", aspects which she felt would likewise change how she moved and carried herself. She also saw her emotional state as important, indicating that a happy Gay would carry herself differently than a miserable Gay. Jean saw the intensity of her studying as having an impact on the way she would move. Jean indicated that the more transitory aspect of being dressed up would also have an effect. Elsie found her movement and carriage varying as her focus oscillated between being some way and getting some where. The duration of the impact of each of these factors was not discussed by the co-researchers, but appeared to be connected directly with the length of time that the activity was taking place. For example, Gay would continue to move "much more gracefully" as long as she was exercising three times a week. When she ceased doing that she would move more sluggishly.

Gay, Jean and Elsie had been describing different factors impinging upon how they saw themselves moving and carrying themselves. As these aspects of self-perception -

movement and carriage - are by their very definitions dynamic, It is logical that they would be open to change. In contrast, a person might see the structure of her body as being more permanent in nature. A previous exploration with a woman called Susan indicated that perception of body structure and state of health could likewise vary dramatically. Upon my recommendation Susan would sit quietly and listen to her breathing, employing this technique to assist her in simply becoming aware of her body. She had been doing this for approximately one week and was beginning to feel more positive about her physical self. In fact she felt so good about her build that for one session she chose to wear a pair of jeans which she had felt previously were too tight for her. As she focused upon her breathing she became vividly aware that:

> the jeans are still too tight. And I
> am fat. And flabby. And sloppy.
> It is becoming harder for me to breath
> smoothly. I am probably coming down
> with a cold.

And the session went downhill from there. The tightness of her clothing had prompted a reaction of self-disgust beyond which she had felt for some time. In contrast, Jean had indicated that when she was dressed up she felt that she carried herself much better. At that point in the interview there had not been an exploration of what being dressed up meant for Jean. Judging by Susan's response in the opposite direction a fair conjecture might be that Jean's "dressed up" would involve the wearing of comfortable clothes which did not restrict physical functions such as breathing. Susan's tight jeans had placed uncomfortable pressure along her thighs, around her hips, and about her waist. She had felt pushed upon and cut into. Her interpretation of this pressure was that she was at fault: she was "fat. And flabby. And sloppy". It was not because the jeans were inappropriately sized for her. Many intriguing questions present themselves, such as why would Susan blame herself at this point? Was the correlation that Jean took a corresponding credit for being dressed up, and that was why she carried herself "better"? And how did Jean perceive her physical structure when she was dressed up? How important was the fit of the clothes in her body image? And why would a person chose to wear that which was uncomfortable if the result is a decrease in self-esteem? Other questions could be raised relative to this discussion which could prove to be fruitful upon further investigation. As these intriguing strands were not followed in this study they must

wait upon another weaver to pull them together.

What was noted in this study in the comparison of the two situations of Jean and Susan was that what was worn affected self-perception and, in Jean's case, the enactment of that self-perception - i.e. carriage. The linearity of cause-effect appeared to surface also in the other factors which emerged earlier in this discussion. For example, for Gay a high level of activity resulted in a energetic manner of moving. Elsie's being preoccupied led to a set jaw. How a person perceived certain aspects of her physical self - her way of moving, her carriage, her structure, and her level of health - could be changed by the situation in which she found herself, and how she interpreted that situation both mentally and emotionally.

In the descriptions mentioned so far regarding the co-researchers' perceptions of how their moving changed, comparisons were made within the concept of a present time. For example, differences might exist in daily movement according to whether one was preoccupied or relaxed. Two of the co-researcher enlarged their focus to include the way they remembered themselves moving in the past with how they perceived themselves moving now. For Hazel, changes had occurred dramatically as a result of a serious car accident. At the time of the interview she was still in the process of mending, not yet having reached the level of rehabilitation which was seen as possible. In describing how she saw herself moving at the time of the interview she kept comparing it to both her pre-accident 'style' and her soon-after-the-accident manner, thus bringing out a sense of transition which was emerging in the healing process.

> When I used to run everything used to be
> so easy. And it felt so nice to run.
> And now it is so much work.
>
> I used to always look at the ground because
> I was nervous of tripping over the cracks
> in the sidewalk and so I am getting more
> upright and feeling more comfortable with
> the limitations that my leg has. ... I used
> to really limp and now I limp a lot less.

Because Hazel was in such a state of transition it was very difficult for her to have an image of herself moving. When asked to describe how she moved she replied, after a fairly long pause:

> That's difficult because I am learning how

> to (move) sort of fresh, like it's a brand new experience. So I have a tendency to say 'plodding' - but - cause I know I don't really plod but I am going through the process of learning how to walk properly - so I haven't really got a grip on how I would describe it with one word yet. Like I am not at ease with what I have yet.

Perhaps it is not fair to say that Hazel's image of herself moving was changing, because - as she said herself - she did not have a clear picture to be changed. There was too much flux occurring for any structure to emerge. Because she was relearning how to walk she was, in many ways, like a young child. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the apparent trait aspect of body image, certain elements need to be set in order for a base to exist upon which a structure such as body image can be built. In Hazel's situation there was too much shifting for much setting to occur.

But this was not true with Fern. As far as I know, Fern had not been involved with any recent trauma relative to her physical self. Her body and its mode of being was relatively stable. Yet as with Hazel she saw herself as having changed in the way she moved from how she was in the past. She differed from Hazel in two important ways. Firstly, Fern appeared to have a clear picture of herself in the past, as indicated by her comment that she didn't "see (her) physical self as any different from the way (she) used to be". Although she could intellectually accept the fact that her structure had changed she still felt as she did when she was thirty years younger - obviously a stable image. As brought forward in the previous discussion under 'No Change?' the picture had 'set' and remained relatively static over the years. But the movement element of this picture had been affected.

> (I) walk fast, but I creak at the joints. I don't move gracefully anymore. I move slowly, in comparison to the way I used to move. I come down the stairs quite heavily.

Fern was aware that her manner of moving, similar to her actual structure, had changed. She was aware of this change in moving not only in an intellectual sense, but also holistically in that the changes were becoming part of how she saw herself. Continued discussion with Fern revealed that movement, as involved in being active, was very important for her. Even though she wouldn't mind doing without her physical body, Fern

would mind doing without activity.

> I like to be active. I do enjoy physical things still.
>
> (There seems to be a separation between the structure of the body and what the body can do, as far as the importance to you?)
>
> That's true.

Perhaps this difference in importance to herself was the reason that Fern would be aware of changes in movement and not so cognizant of changes in structure. There is a common tendency to pay more attention to those things which matter personally, and persons are therefore more sensitive to those specific elements.

Fern's awareness of change in her movement differed from Hazel's in one other way. This aspect of Hazel's body image was shattered in one instant in time. Fern's understanding shifted over a period of years as she gradually became aware of differences in her movement. The factor of change with Fern was that of aging. Perhaps the slowness of the changes which had occurred allowed for them to be incorporated into a changing body image, whereas the suddenness of Hazel's changes did not lend to incorporation of them into self-perception. Again, this did not appear to be true relative to the structure component. The more dynamic aspect of movement may force flexibility, thereby facilitating an easier recognition and adoption of change.

Similar to Hazel, Fern was in transition relative to her body image. At the time of the interview Fern appeared to be very aware of her age and that this meant that she was 'old'. And this sense of oldness infiltrated everything, including - naturally - her perception of herself.

> A perception of age slows down your whole self-image bit. Some people are aging too fast because of the self-image they have. Because their physical abilities have changed they think that they can't think as clearly. Not true. That part of life hasn't slipped away, even if their bones creak and their muscles are stiff.
>
> (Is there any good in aging, as far as perception of your physical self?)

> I think that this idea that we are aging gracefully is a lot of nonsense. So far there isn't anything good physically about aging. I think aging has given us time to develop internally, our emotional life and perception of things, but I wish I could do more physically.

Throughout the interview Fern oscillated between feeling old and feeling that she was who she always had been. For example, when she was "whipping around the yard (she didn't) think about the fact that (she was) getting old". Yet at other times her movement patterns would impinge upon her consciousness so that she had to acknowledge that changes had occurred. Structurally this awareness was not demanded unless she actually saw herself in pictures or mirrors. Fern shared with Hazel the bringing home of her present state - as compared to the past which she still, at times, saw herself being - by the inability to do what she could before. And she recognised the impact of this in a poignant statement:

> I certainly feel that my perception of my physical self has changed enough that - I guess it worries me. And that must do something to your self-image, mustn't it?

From this second concentration it would seem that certain elements of body image are state-like characteristics, and can be changed by a variety of influences. This appeared to be particularly true of how the woman saw themselves moving and carrying themselves. In the one situation with Susan even the perception of the structure of one's body was seen to change in a very short period of time. Some of the influences which were brought forward by the co-researchers as to what might lead to changes in self-perception were the level and amount of physical and/or mental activity, the state of health and emotion, the fit and type of clothing being worn, and the dichotomy of an internal or external focus.

Other's Perception

When the women were stating that how they moved and how they carried themselves varied, depending upon certain aspects, the effect of the perceptions of others regarding themselves was not mentioned. Each of the elements which was brought forward tended to be based upon the individual's actions, or lack of them. When any impact upon body image of the perception of others was mentioned it was generally in the area of structure.

> If you get away from the visual (mirror picture of self) you sort of accept yourself as you are. A lot of our self-image is because of the media. (Fern)
>
> (What comes into your mind when you hear the term 'body image'?)
> The media hype and the things you see in the paper and fashion. (Gay)
>
> (Do you think that you see your physical self the same way that others do?)
> Not usually. Other people see me different than I do.
> (Which would you consider the more positive?)
> Probably how other people see me. Definitely so.
> (Does the more positive perception that others have about you help you to be more positive about yourself?)
> I think only if I am already leaning in that direction. If I feel that I look like hell and someone tells me that I look really great today it is not going to do anything. Not a thing. (Jean)

The above descriptions of the co-researchers ranged from the negative effect of external feedback which Fern indicated, through the brief mention-only by Gay, to the minimal impact alluded to by Jean. The quotations included above were the only references provided by the co-researchers as to the media and the opinions of others, with the exception of the responses to the direct questions relative to how the co-researchers thought other people perceived them (#7,#10). Any possible impact of other's perceptions and/or feedback did not emerge in their responses to those direct questions. This lack of reference did not fit in with the sociological approach to body image.

Another feedback system which did not seem to impinge upon how the women saw themselves was their own reflection in the mirror. The references to the mirror, as with the references to the media, were very limited. There appeared to be a lack of identification with the person who was seen in that reflection. This was most graphically described by Gay.

> Sometimes when I look in the mirror I am surprised. If I haven't looked in the mirror for a couple of days, and

> I look in the mirror, it doesn't look
> like me. I have trouble recognizing
> myself.

As Gay explained it, although her body had changed, as objectified in the mirror's reflection back to her, her own perceptions of that body had not changed, and therefore she had trouble recognizing herself in that reflection. Even before those changes in her body had occurred, she may not have seen the same person as she felt herself to be, as expressed this time by Elsie.

> (I am) solid - the mirror says so -
> however inside I feel tall/longer
> than I look now.

How Elsie felt inside did not agree with how the mirror told her she actually was. Elsie's internal self differed, as did Gay's remembered self. The concrete picture in the mirror did not seem to have that great an impact, as the women indicated that it was like seeing a stranger. They had not apparently adopted as their own body image that 'stranger' as themselves. The irony of this was reiterated by Fern in that she seemed to feel that if a person could "get away from the visual-mirror picture of yourself - you sort of accept yourself as you are". The underlined phrase indicated that Fern felt that who she actually was did not emerge in the mirrored picture, but was someone else.

This incongruency of the mirrored picture and the felt self was also seen in the responses to the questions regarding how the women thought others saw them. These responses involved both contradictions between and agreements with how the co-researchers perceived themselves and how they thought others perceived them.

> (How do you think other people perceive you?)
> She surely is aging. When I think of
> myself moving down the mall I think
> that they must surely think 'poor old
> soul'. It is because I feel that I am
> going so much slower than I used to.
> ... A tall woman with a purpose. Lately
> I don't know. Do I slouch along? No I
> don't, but I wonder if that is the effect
> that I give lately? Wonder what happened
> to my purpose.
> ... I don't know why I perceive this change.
> (re. how others would see you?). I am afraid
> it is because I realize that I don't look the

same and so I can't possibly have the same effect I used to. (Fern)

It's kind of a superficial thing so they would believe they see someone younger than I am and that's partly the way I dress which has nothing to do with the way I look.
... that I'm confident. Not aggressive. Not shy ... purposeful. Generally when I am walking around I have some goal in mind, be it ever so small, and I think it shows in the way I move. Happy. (Gay)

Casual appearance but bent forward, leaning into, probably preoccupied, frowning. ... I think I'm perceived as 'comfortable' - older than I feel inside myself. (Elsie)

Someone who looks close to being attractive. Weak, until they see me playing volleyball. Thin, definitely. I don't know how many times I've been asked if I'm anorexic. (Jean)

A very upright person. (Long pause)
This is hard, because my image is changing.
(Do you think someone watching you knows that you are learning?)
It depends on how good an observer they are. I think if you could really observe you would see that I am working at it. I think a lot of people wouldn't even notice. So let's say they would see me as someone who has a certain amount of confidence. That is what I try to portray.
... Everybody figures I'm tall. Tall and skinny. And I am really surprised by that. I don't think I am that skinny. (Hazel)

As indicated in the previous discussion Jean believed that others saw her as more attractive than she did herself. She did not give any indication that this perception by others had much bearing on her interaction with them. Fern was the only other co-researcher to make a reference to her looks, and in her case she felt that the change in her appearance over the years had impacted upon her relationships with others so that they did not respond to her in the same manner which they had done earlier. She no longer had "the same effect (she) used to", however the effect was seen to be. Fern recognized that it was her

realization concerning her looks and her feelings about how she moved that she was really describing, not necessarily the responses of others. This became apparent when she tried to respond to the question of what image she thought she gave as she walked into a room. Her struggle in answering this question led her to acknowledge that this was a hard one for her to see herself in. Perhaps her awareness of how she is trying to accommodate her physical changes into her body image makes it difficult for her to yet perceive how others might see her.

This idea that being in transition makes it difficult to look beyond to other's perceptions correlates with Hazel's responses. She was so aware that she was working on her movement that she could not be clear on how others might see her. What she did perceive that others would pick up was more connected to her spirit than to her appearance, and that was the element of confidence. This was what she was trying to portray, and therefore she needed to believe that this was what was coming across. Hazel was focused upon developing her confidence in the area of movement, as Gay had done relative to her confidence in interacting with others.

> Not shy, which is something I have had to
> work on, because I have always been a person
> who makes a conscious effort not to be (shy),
> to meet people's eyes - (Gay)

As with Hazel this element of confidence had been such a strong focus that it was natural for Gay to believe that others would see it in her as well.

Also connected with the person's spirit was Elsie's comment that others would see her as preoccupied, and therefore frowning. Unlike Hazel and Gay this was not something which she was doing consciously, as was brought out in her description of her carriage as being unnatural. But what was natural for her was having a sense of purpose, which was something about herself of which she was aware and which was important to her. Because she would be focussing upon her purpose she would be seen as preoccupied. For the three older women a sense of purpose appeared to be very important and integral to their description of themselves. As with Hazel and Gay, Elsie saw her personal focus being so strong that others would pick it up in their perception of her.

The co-researchers appeared to be saying that aspects of the spirit - confidence, purpose, happiness - would be picked up by others in the same way that those experiencing them would do. However, it was the belief of four of the five women that other people

would perceive their age and structure differently from themselves. Gay thought that the way she dressed would lead others to think that she was younger than she was, mainly because they would not look closely enough to notice otherwise. Elsie believed that others would perceive her as older than she felt inside - not necessarily older than her chronological years. For both these women age was definitely a matter of how one felt inside, and not to be measured by years alone. In Gay's case not looking closely would render an inaccurate evaluation regarding age: in Elsie's case not looking deeply would result in seeing only the surface.

Jean and Hazel disagreed with what others told them about their physical structure. Hazel disagreed at a literal level, not seeing herself as either that tall or that skinny. Jean disagreed with the interpretation others made regarding her effectiveness because of her physical structure, in that they saw her as weak, whereas she knew she had a certain amount of physical power because of the level of volleyball in which she was able to participate. Jean also disagreed with others seeing her thinness as extreme to the point of being anorexic. In this way she agreed with Hazel who likewise thought others exaggerated the extent of her slimness. For both the women this slimness was a natural and healthy state which they had been for a long time, if not their whole lives.

How the co-researchers thought others saw them - whether or not that perception was the same as their own - appeared to be strongly connected with what the women were most aware of in themselves. This awareness might have come about as a result of particular changes in the physical self, as with Fern and her aging, and Hazel and her lack of mobility. Or the awareness might have been present because, for whatever reason, this was an area that the individual had been working on in the far or recent past, as with Gay and Hazel and confidence. Awareness also occurred as a result of the comments of others, as noticed with Jean and Hazel in regards to their slimness. It was only in the latter case that it was clear that it was others' opinions which were being expressed. In the former two situations the awareness of the co-researchers about themselves may not have been echoed in the perceptions of those around. Again, from this it is difficult to see that outside influences have that much effect upon how the women perceive themselves on a day to day basis.

What is Important

As was noticed in the above discussion, what was important to be for the co-researchers dramatically affected how they saw their physical selves. At times it appeared that what mattered to the particular person was directly connected to the body and its operations. For example, Fern indicated a strong desire to be active, and she appeared to link this with the actual speed at which she moved. As she felt herself becoming less active - below the level she desired - she noticed that she was moving slower than before, and with a greater heaviness. Or perhaps it might have been that the awareness of her reduction in speed led to her being less active. Or maybe they are the same thing. Although Jean did not necessarily see herself as lacking in health, an area of extreme importance to her, she indicated an awareness of herself as being on the edge regarding her physical health. This awareness became apparent in her response to the question of what she felt was important for her to know about her body.

> I should know what is normal, for me,
> in regards to whatever body function,
> shape - so I would know when something
> wasn't. To know what (my body) could
> do and what it couldn't - the limits -
> how far I can push it. I guess the
> biggest thing for me is the normal/
> abnormal, because of the allergies. I
> have to tell as soon as possible if I'm
> allergic to something, and I have to
> detect tiny, tiny changes.

Through past experience Jean had learned to be very conscious of her own physiology, including reactions to outside influences. For her it was important to be her "normal", and she was aware of what her normal felt like. Her body image centered around how close she was to this normalacy.

Another area of being that appeared to be important to Jean was that of attractiveness. As indicated in the previous discussion this area was one in which Jean had received a fair amount of feedback which she perceived as positive. This highlighting by others might have been the reason why Jean likewise saw it as important. This aspect of appearance may also be part of her development of body image, in that younger people, in the still-formulating process of self-image, select more variables on which to focus.

Whereas Fern had indicated what was important to her by her perceived lack of it -

being active, Elsie emphasized an aspect which mattered most to her by her reiteration throughout the interview that she 'possessed' that aspect - i.e. strength. She connected her understanding of strength directly to the body's operation when she indicated that she was talking about "a very good gift which is an 'iron constitution'". She later extended that concept of strength as she mentioned that "that strength is there - and I think always will be even when I'm frail - it is inherent". Elsie was not simply talking about physical endurance and/or power, but something deeper, something which led her to describe herself as "strong at the center". The physical characteristic was not only important to her image, but also a particular way of being.

The importance of being a certain way was also seen clearly in Hazel's response to the question: "If you were to compare your physical self to an animal what would you compare it to?" Initially she answered by saying a peregrine falcon. But then she phoned the next day to change her animal from a falcon to a dolphin.

> Like the falcon the dolphin has to work
> to survive, although the falcon may have
> more things going against it, but the
> dolphin has more <u>fun</u> doing it.

The concept of having fun was an important one for Hazel. One may be having a hard time in life, as she certainly was in attempting to recover from her accident. But for her there can and should be fun in it. This idea resurfaced later when she indicated that she was "always trying to push (her) body to try something else that's fun. It might be scary to try this - but (she would) try it because it might be fun". Within how she saw her physical self Hazel also saw a motivating spirit of fun.

<u>Importance of the Body Itself</u>

One of the questions of this study attempted to directly elicit from the co-researchers an awareness of the importance of the body in being human. The possible problems involved in the question itself will be discussed in more detail later. What is valuable to note at this point in the discussion is the variety in and content of the responses given to the question: "If you could be everything you are but without a body, would you like that?" Two of the women responded 'Yes' in a way which indicated that they saw their physical selves as something which kept them from doing what they wanted to do.

> That's easy. That's sort of like saying you're a spirit, basically, with nothing hindering you. And I imagine that time. I'm always swimming in my dreams. Without my body I could do lots of things. Cause I think of the body as a limiting factor. (Hazel)

> Yes, I think I would like being without a body. I feel quite happy about what I have achieved mentally and emotionally, and where I plan to go. (Fern)

Hazel's experience of her body around the time of the interview was one of pain and the hard work required to do simple activities such as walking. She was still going to physiotherapy three times a week, as she had been doing for at least a year. The one place where she didn't feel that she was "plodding" was the swimming pool. "Being in the water things are much easier and they flow better". From this her perceiving her body as something pulling her down and away from what she wanted to do was logical.

Yet this simple interpretation did not cover the implications of another comment of Hazel's which surfaced later in the interview.

> Because (the body) is limiting you can't do many fun things. Like it would be really fun to fly, but of course you can't because you have a body.

As discussed earlier, having fun was important to Hazel, and she desired to do fun things that were outside the capability of the human body, such as flying. She believed that if she was a spiritual being only, without a body, she would be able to do these things which she wanted to do, and the correlation was that with the body she was limited.

Fern's response appeared to echo this viewpoint. As brought forward earlier she was in some ways also in a state of transition regarding the incorporation of her present self into her body image, in her case because of how she perceived herself in getting older. In the quotation given earlier she appeared to think that she had gotten all she wanted out of having a body, and was prepared to jetsam it as unwanted/unneeded luggage. In the previous discussion it appeared that in the past her physical self was an acceptable part of how she wished to present herself, and the effect she desired to have. But now her looks and her manner of moving detracted from how she wished to be seen - they were a

detriment and it would be nice if they could be discarded.

In the quotation referred to in this section, Fern appeared to indicate that her mental and emotional achievements were somehow based upon and/or involved with her body. She did not allude to having achieved all she wanted in the physical realm, and therefore being ready to go on without a body. She instead indicated that she felt "quite happy about what (she had) achieved mentally and emotionally, and where (she planned) to go". In this statement she seemed to be aware that her body and her mind and her emotions were all interconnected.

Elsie also saw her body as being connected, but in her case it was a connection beyond herself to her past. One of the ways in which her body was important to Elsie was:

> It is a part of me that means family
> of orientation ... a lot of my basic
> roots/identity are bound up in my body.

Elsie appeared to be saying that her physical self was part of a way of looking at life, a direction faced. Not only might she have - for example - her grandfather's nose, but she might tend to have the same alignment as her aunt, and attack life with the same vigour as her great-grandmother. In her way of being a physical entity in the world she carried past manifestations of her family - her roots, and this helped her to identify who she was as an individual.

Not only was Elsie's sense of self related to the body in its genetic aspect, but there was also a connection relative to being in the world.

> Funny to think about what my body does
> for me. I am a bit of a spiritual snob,
> forgetting that my body allows me to do
> what I do, and be who I am.

In this statement Elsie recognized an enabling factor of being physical. In some ways she had become so caught up in her spiritual being that she had turned away from her physical self. Answering the questions in the interview had reminded Elsie that her 'doing' and 'being' also involved who/what she was relative to her body.

The 'doing' and 'being' in connection to others was brought out in Gay's response to the question. Her response itself was full of questions, questions which pointed out some of the many ways that being physical places us in the world.

(If you could be everything you are, but without a body, would you like that?) Would everyone else also not have a physical self? Not if I was by myself, probably not. I would have trouble relating to people. If everyone was non-physical then it would be fine. I can't help but think in terms of what I do day to day. How would you do that without a body? What's the point? I could still be my own friend without having a physical body. I imagine I could find purposeful things to do without my body. Otherwise most everything I do is very physical so it would be a totally different way of thinking.

Gay's wondering about the nature of others in this make-believe situation showed that, for her, a strong way in which people relate to each other is as physical beings. Even less direct interaction with others was body-based. As Gay phrased it: "Everything I do is very physical". Her day by day involvement in the area of drama meant that she was constantly aware of the expressive elements of being physical, and was always focussing on this in her own self and helping others to do so as well. These were her "purposeful things to do", and without a body she would need to find other ways of contributing. Gay indicated that this would require not only the discovery of different activities, but also a "totally different way of thinking". Her purpose, her intentionality in the world would of necessity be changed.

Jean presented another angle in her description of the necessity of being physical for her.

(If you could be everything you are but without a body, would you like that?)

That's a weird question. Being without you physical self I would equate with being quadriplegic, or virtually the mind is the only thing that works. I would say the physical self is pretty important. I can't imagine being without it. There are more possibilities to everyday life as to what you could and couldn't do.

In one way Jean is similar to Hazel and Fern in that she has multiple trouble with her health, in her case because of allergies and internal problems. From this it might be expected that, like those women, she would be glad to imagine a world in which she would not be burdened by a body. Yet Jean saw her body not as a limiting factor, but something by which her possibilities in the world were increased.

Was the difference simply one of being positive or negative in one's perspective? If so than perhaps the consistency of that variable relative to the body can be seen within the interviews. Two of the questions in the interview sessions might be considered for their potential in revealing attitudes towards one's body. The first to be looked at was #2: "How would you describe your body, in one word or statement?". For whatever reason Jean was unable to respond to this question.

Fern, on the other hand, appeared to have no trouble in answering this question in a concise and direct manner. Her answer was simply that she would describe her body as "fat". Later comments revealed that she did see this as a way of being which she did not like - in other words - a negative thing. This would appear to back up the theory that she perceived her body in a negative way and therefore had no trouble seeing herself without it.

Hazel's reply to this question did not fit so neatly into the positive/negative hypothesis. She described her body as "incredible", and the tone of her voice when saying it indicated that this was pretty exciting and positive. This delight in her body would seem to contribute to her not wanting to be without it. And yet,as discussed earlier, this was not the case. Perhaps Hazel's personality trait of desiring to have fun led her to picture being without a body as another type of adventure. Whatever the case, it did not appear that it was a negative identification of the body that resulted in her thinking she would like to be without one. This was reflected in her response to question #4: "If your body was another person what kind of relationship would you like to have with that person, and do you think that this is the relationship you have?". Hazel wanted "a fun relationship, doing fun things". And she saw herself as having that kind of relationship with her physical self. Once again this did not appear to fit in with the concept that it was a negativity which led her to see her body as limiting.

Fern's response to this question of relationship was more difficult to assess. She indicated that she would have a "friendly (relationship), because I am a friendly person.

Able to talk to that person". Both Fern and Hazel indicated that they would respond to their body as another person the same way that they would respond to anyone else. There was no specialness to the fact that what was being discussed was their bodies, their personal selves. The question itself may have created this generalization, although this did not appear to be so with Jean.

> (... how would you relate to that person?)
>
> A friend.
>
> (In what way?)
>
> Because I like to think of myself as body and soul, the whole.
>
> (Is that how you relate to your body?)
>
> No. Looking at it one way 'it' is an enemy - because of my breathing. Looking at it another way, we are always at odds, so it would be an acquaintance, a not-well-liked one.

Jean's reply to this question at the beginning of the interview set the stage for her later inability to imagine herself without a body. She saw herself as a whole being, indivisible, unable to be considered as parts,regardless of how she felt about her body. It was simply that she had no option. Jean, as Jean, was Jean as/with a body.

For Elsie it was not quite so straight forward. She saw her relationship to her body as being one of a :

> Sister, because I'm somewhat related but not totally congruent with my body - eg. I get irritated with it/her when the body part of me is tired and I want to do more.

Elsie did not appear to be prepared to identify as completely with her physical self as did Jean. At times she wanted to put some distance between her and her body, the kind of distance one would have between herself and her sister. When she was irritated with her body she would only be "somewhat related". Jean acknowledged that, regardless of how she felt about it, she was her body. There was no question of any separation.

The importance of the body to each woman appeared to vary, as they considered what they would be without one; perhaps a mind only, or maybe a spirit only. The differing responses brought out, a little bit, a potential richness regarding how each woman saw her physicality in the world. For Jean her physical being was herself: there was no sense of being separated. For Elsie and Gay their bodies were integral to their relating with their past and with others in their present. Fern saw an interaction of the mental and emotional with her physical self. And Hazel appeared to perceive her body as an anchor, keeping her from sailing into adventure.

A few of the various facets of being a physical creature were thus exposed to the light. These facets also emerged as dimensions of the physical self throughout the interviews.

Dimensions of the Physical Self

Early in the first interview I noticed that the responses to the questions were occurring from more than one perspective. There were times when a co-researcher appeared to contradict herself, as when Fern stated that aging had helped her in that she didn't have to compete any more. And yet earlier she had mentioned judging herself against other people. Trying to decipher a reason behind the conflicting presentations led to the conclusion that different dimensions of being physical were emerging at different moments, and from the same individual. And that focusing on one dimension might result in different feelings towards the body than when focusing on another aspect.

This was clearly seen in Fern's response to the concept of being bodiless, as discussed previously. On the one hand she was quite ready to be without a body, having achieved all she needed to through it, yet she also wanted wanted to remain active, doing physical things. There seemed to be a separation between how she felt about the structure of her body and how she appreciated what her body could do. Throughout the conversation with Fern it had become clear that she was not satisfied with the condition of her body - its structural and physical fitness level - or with the way she perceived herself moving. For Fern there seemed to be an attractive potential regarding being active that went beyond those elements.

Jean also presented a multi-layered picture of her relationship to herself. As a result of previous comments she had made in the interview she was asked:

(If you had a scale from one to five with one saying you hate your body and five saying you love it, where would you place yourself?)

Between 1 1/2 and 2.

(For what reasons?)

A couple, the allergies for one, asthma included. My legs, the bumps, the look of them. My reproductive system and I are at odds, severely.

(So health and looks are two things that cause your rating?)

Yes.

(Using the same scale how do you feel about the way you move?)

I'm not infatuated with it. 3 1/2 - 4.

(Why the difference between the movement and the structure of the body?)

I guess the physical stuff just drives me nuts. And I don't have time to be concerned about the rest.

As with Fern, Jean appeared to see a difference in herself regarding how she moved and the nature of her physical structure. The way she moved seemed to be more acceptable to her that either the way she looked or the state of her health. Jean indicated that the constant alertness she needed to have towards her body relative to the allergies and problems with her reproductive system kept the element of her health in the forefront of her thinking. Her movement was a more natural part of her in that it was not so important that she be conscious of it. This lack of focus, as compared with her health, appeared to result in a more positive appraisal of this aspect.

Gay also referred to different dimensions of how she related to her physical self in her discussion regarding seeing herself in a mirror. Who she saw in the mirror and who she saw herself being were so different that "(she) had trouble recognizing (herself)". In their

interviews Elsie and Fern had echoed this lack of recognition of their mirrored selves. Gay credited this confusion to the fact that "(her) body has changed but (her) perceptions haven't".

What is important to note here is that the women appeared to see themselves in many different ways, relative to their bodies. How they would view themselves would differ according to what they were focused on - their health, or their movement, or their actions, or whether or not they were standing in front of a mirror at the time. In the previous discussion relative to changes in body image various factors which might impact on one's perspective of her body were mentioned - type and level of activity engaged upon, amount of free time, and the fit of one's clothing being the major ones. In this present discussion it can be seen that these factors can impact on the different dimensions of body image. For example, wearing a tight pair of jeans may affect how a person sees herself moving, or change how one thinks she looks when seeing herself in a mirror, or remind one of the abdominal pains she has.

Another possible factor regarding body image was brought out in Elsie's statement that her body "is a part of (her) that means family orientation". If this sense of family-in-the-body is true for others it would be important to know how the family factor is regarded by the participant. If the individual is at a point where she is rejecting her family unit, or parts of it, might it be that she would also be likely to reject the physical representation of that in herself? If the interactions within the family are positive and supportive, would that be reflected in the attitude towards physical self?

Definitions

The motivating factor for this present research was the need to explore what a healthy body image might look like. For this reason two questions in Study Two specifically referred to body image, both seeking definitions from the co-researchers.

Body Image

The first question simply asked: "What comes into your mind when someone uses the term 'body image'?". The co-researchers' responses ranged from the concrete to the more abstract:

> Physical aspect,how they look, conduct

self, see themselves. (Fern)

> The way you see your body when you look in the mirror, and the way you feel about it. How you look, how you move, bodily functions. (Jean)

Body image is the seeing of the self - in this the women appear to agree. But it was the seeing of what of the self, or even what 'self',that then became a issue. For Jean and Fern body image was of the self that was seen when looking at their reflections in a mirror - the way they looked. And when they looked, what were they seeing? Did they perceive a whole body standing in front of them, or did certain features stand out? Were they seeing a two-dimensional figure of height and width, but lacking depth? Was there a criteria figure overlaying the one created by their reflection, an imaginary image to which the other was compared? And thus did each woman see a figure inadequate to or overflowing the outline of the ideal, as suggested in the first study with Jane in the first study? The abbreviated responses encouraged by the format, as well as the lack of follow-up in the approach adopted, left many unanswered questions.

One inclusion in Jean's definition of body image was the mention of "bodily functions". Not only was her perception of her external structure involved in her body image, but she also "saw" her internal structures. There are at least two reasons why this item might have been part of Jean's particular body image. At the time of the interview she was well into her education leading to becoming a medical doctor. An awareness of the insides of a human body was therefore encouraged daily. As well, Jean's many allergies meant that it was important for her to know "what was normal ... with regards to whatever bodily function".

Body image was different for Hazel, in that she deliberately mentioned that it was not about "heart and lungs". For her body image involved a sense of capability.

> What you see your body as being, in a spiritual sense. Not a body image in terms of the heart and lungs. It is more in terms of what the body can do, the spirit of the body. What you are capable of. What you can make yourself do, that you know you can do. It is like the image you of you doing. Something that you can see. Body image is how you picture yourself doing something.

The concreteness of a figure in a mirror was replaced by a more nebulous concept of potential and performance. Hazel had moved the shift of body image from the noun of 'body' to the verb of 'doing'. This verbal nature of body image also emerged in Jean's definition - "how you move", and perhaps was what Fern was referring to when she used the term "conduct self". In Hazel's response she did not appear to be considering a structure, as had been proposed by Fern and Jean, but rather an active way of being.

The sense of a person's body image containing an awareness of potential - of "what you are capable of" - was reiterated in another way by Gay.

> The media hype and the things you see in the paper and fashion. To define the term - how I see myself, how I see my shape, fitness rather than how other people see me. It is how I see myself.

There appeared to be a combining of seeing structure and seeing potential in Gay's definition of body image. She referred to shape, but then went on to clarify that she was referring to her fitness level. What was not clear was whether she was referring to her level of fitness as seen in her structure - i.e. her musculature, her alignment - or whether she was picturing what she could do because of her fitness level. The reason for the confusion regarding the specifics may be because both of these features were included, as well as others not mentioned here.

Gay was very clear that body image was how she saw herself, and not what society, through various forms of the media, declared to be important. In so doing she appeared to be accepting total responsibility for her picture of herself. She also underlined a strong sense of ownership in that it was her body image.

Elsie's training in psychology was apparent as she likewise brought out the ownership aspect in her definition of body image.

> Body image means one's sense of self.

Healthy Body Image

The second question involving a definition focused on what a healthy body image would be. In many ways the concept of a healthy body image appeared to naturally emerge from the interviews as the process of considering 'body image' seemed to elicit thinking on how each person wanted to be and/or remembered being. For Elsie having a healthy body

image meant one was:

> "probably respectful of one's body. Pretty marvellous, really. Not preoccupied - hypochondria is boring - but not taking the body for granted either.

Elsie had indicated earlier on in the interview that she would "be healthier if (she was) more in tune with (her) body's needs - appetites, etc." She felt that over the years she had ignored the signals which her body had given her relative to rest and what she ate. At this point in her life she perceived this lack of awareness and response as having been detrimental, and therefore 'tuning in' would be a good thing. But she indicated that the tuning in should not become a preoccupation, as that extreme would likewise not be healthy.

Jean also brought forward the need for balance in her discussion of a healthy body image.

> I think a healthy body image is being more positive about the way you look. Accepting the way your body looks, the way your body behaves. Accepting the things you don't like and not going to drastic measures to change them. Not basing your day - not aligning to a belief that your day has to be the same way that your body feels or you think it feels, or the way it looks.

Jean's description of being more positive had integral to itself the concept of acceptance. She went on to indicate that this accepting meant that "drastic measures" - not clarified here - would not be taken to change what was undesirable. Not only would the unwanted be allowed to exist, but it would be incorporated into a sense of self. In this she appeared to indicate that the view one would have of one self would be realistic. But her previous comments did not appear to agree with this interpretation.

> A healthy body image is not necessarily the same as a realistic or accurate one. If other people think that she is a 'hot one' but that person feels that she looks really good - if the general opinion was really negative and that person's opinion was positive I don't think that's detrimental.

Here Jean appeared to be saying that it was not necessary to see one's self -

physically - as she really was as long as the person felt good about herself. Yet this seemed to disagree with the idea of accepting things "you don't like" about yourself. Was it not realistic to see the items which are unliked? So if she was being realistic and seeing those things - and accepting them - then was that not part of her definition of a healthy body image? Was not the being realistic and having a healthy body image the same thing? Deeper consideration of the above statement appeared to reveal that what Jean meant by 'realistic' was how other people perceived her. Realizing her definition of 'realistic' removed the apparent contradiction. It was possible for Jean to see something about her looks and/or her behavior which she didn't like and still have a positive opinion of herself, if she accepted who and what she was. Having a healthy body image meant feeling positive about herself, regardless of how she thought others perceived her.

Gay did not quite agree with Jean that the positive feelings, in themselves, were enough for health.

> (Is a realistic body image a healthy one?)
>
> They are not the same but they are interdependent on one another. If you know what your image is and can accept it then it's healthy, and if you don't know what it is you can't accept it. I think you have a realistic outlook in order to have a healthy one.
>
> (So if you felt good about your body and you knew that you were 15 - 20 pounds overweight and you liked yourself that way it would be healthy?)
>
> From a mental viewpoint. From a physical angle you are causing yourself all sorts of problems by carrying that kind of weight around.

For Gay, in order for to one to have a truly healthy body image one must also have a healthy body, in the purely physical sense. Heather had echoed this idea when questioned as to the different image her doctor had of her than she had of herself. She had mentioned that she had seen herself as a lumbering St. Bernard dog, and her doctor suggested that she needed to picture herself more accurately, as a highly-active whippet. I had asked her if the apparent accuracy of the doctor's description made it a healthier body image than the

positively-felt but inaccurate picture she had of herself. Heather indicated that what would make the accurate picture healthier for her than the inaccurate one was the fact that in being a St. Bernard person she felt that she could push herself more than was good for her. As a whippet person she would recognize her limits to a greater degree.

So for both Gay and Heather it appeared necessary to be realistic/accurate if that would mean a healthier life style. Whereas Jean saw it as healthy to ignore the opinions of others if they were negative, Gay and Heather saw it as important to respond to others opinions if they directed one towards a healthy lifestyle.

Gay did reflect Jean's concept of the need for acceptance in a healthy body image.

> What makes a healthy image is my
> satisfaction with it. It's not that
> I'm unrealistic about it, because I
> understand the things I need to change.
> I understand I'm not 27 anymore.

Gay had indicated earlier in this discussion that it was necessary to "know what your image is", and that this knowing was the realistic part of the body image. What exactly was known relative to the body image was unclear. It might have been that Gay was referring to one's physical structure as measured by dimensions. She might have been thinking about one's movement as evaluated relative to skill levels. It may have been the results of a fitness test which was in her mind. In any case, it was the acceptance of what was known which made the image healthy. There was an interdependence of the realistic and the healthy body image.

Fern also saw an interaction occurring between the realistic body image and the healthy body image. There seemed to be some need for reconciliation of the internal image with that seen in the mirror.

> As I see myself bodily I am distorted
> from what I think I should be. Therefore
> for a healthy body image I have to get
> the body to the point where I enjoy it.
> The body has to change somewhat to fit
> with the image I have of myself. The
> internal image.

Fern had indicated earlier that she had an internal perception of herself as she was thirty years ago, and she would be unpleasantly surprised each time she saw herself in the mirror. What she 'saw' internally was positive: what was seen externally was negative. What

she felt would be healthy would be for her to become more active so that her overt body would more closely resemble the positive way of being. Fern's internal and external pictures of herself did not agree, and so a healthy trend would be towards becoming the acceptable image so that she would be congruent with actuality, in order to contribute towards a strong self-image.

Gay summarized well the problems involved with any simplistic manner of looking at body image, healthy or not.

> I think it is a much more emotional topic than just are you big enough, do you carry your weight well. You have to have some vested interest in it. 'I love this person, I hate this person'.

Reflection on 'Questions'

The Questions Themselves

The responses of the co-researchers to the questions asked in this study highlighted the importance of the questions themselves - their phrasing, their timing, and their sequencing.

Viewpoint of the Researcher

The selection of the questions was, in part, based upon what was seen by myself as important. In examining the research which had been done to date I was left with a feeling that the concept of 'body image' as presented was oversimplified. I asked for a definition of body image in an attempt to discover if the co-researchers would go beyond the superficial - literally - approach to the concept of body image. Something important had been ignored/overlooked, but it was not clear to me what it was. To some extent this question regarding a definition did expand the possibilities for consideration. Not only did the co-researchers mention the idea of body image involving what they looked like, but they also mentioned the importance of being able to do things, and of being at an optimal level of physical fitness.

In it's oversimplification the research done to date had missed many aspects. One aspect which was generally omitted was that of movement, which in my work as a movement counsellor had been observed to be an important part of how people saw themselves. I

therefore saw as essential that the co-researchers be prompted to discuss this aspect of movement in their descriptions of their body image. This aspect was solicitated both directly - "describe how you move", and indirectly through the 'if' questions (further discussion of the 'if' questions follows). An addendum to the aspect of movement was that of carriage, or posture, of the body. This element also seen to be part of the personal image, whether the woman was moving or stationary.

An underpining of all of the questions was the desire - and here the therapist self was strongly present - to have the co-researchers value their physical selves. This was particularly true regarding the question about being bodiless. Somewhat subconsciously I had asked the question with the expectation that the co-researchers would recognize that without their physical selves they could not be all that they are.

'If' Questions

In forming the questions I had attempted to tap the more creative, abstract aspects of the brain through metaphorical questions - those which started with the term 'If'. Sheehy (1976) had reported on a study which suggested that people work better together if they are allowed "to communicate ideas that are intuitively and metaphorically meaningful to them" (p.202). I hoped that the metaphors encouraged through the 'if questions' would facilitate communication while encouraging the co-researchers to bring forward the more qualitative aspects of body image. The first of the 'if' questions was as follows:

> If you were to compare your physical self to an animal,
> which one would you chose, and why?

This question stayed within the realm of the metaphorical, allowing the co-researchers to look at themselves in a slightly different way. For Gay it was a relatively easy question to answer as this manner of thinking was common to her work situation. To some extent this was also true of Elsie. Hazel, as an artist and an outdoor enthusiast, also appeared comfortable with thinking of herself in this manner, however she changed her initial response after reflecting on it for a day. When this happened I wondered if there was more of a need to work through the image than I had supposed, and that therefore more time was needed in order to answer this question than had been given.

This need for more time would appear to be true relative to Fern's trouble with the question. Initially no animal image came to her at all. When she did manage to picture

herself as an animal it was more relative to what she was not than what she was. As the interview continued she found an image that seemed to fit her, although it was connected to how she used to see herself in the past.

Jean likewise could not respond to this question in the present tense. In fact, she did not respond at all. In her case I felt as if consideration of the question was somehow invading a private area of self-perception, as she appeared quite uncomfortable at that moment in the interview. For that reason I could not tell if returning to the question after allowing more time for thinking about it would have resulted in anything for this co-researcher.

Increased comfort with the process of thinking metaphorically would help in responding to such a question. This approach can be perceived as threatening in that it taps a level of understanding which may not have been consciously considered before.

The second 'if' question asked the co-researcher to imagine her body as another person, and determine how she would like to relate to that person. This analogical approach was thought to tap how acceptable a person found herself, and to do so in a creative manner. As mentioned in the discussion under 'Responses' some co-researchers did not seem to identify with this imaginary person as themselves, and therefore their answers to this question did not really speak to how acceptable their physical self might be to them.

The third 'if' question focused on being everything one is but without a body - would that be positive? As mentioned in the previous section I hoped that this question would stimulate the response that it is impossible to be everything one is without a body. Yet the responses from all but one of the co-researchers indicated that,in their minds, the possibility was there. Discussion of this with others suggested that the very asking of the question presupposed its possibility. And then the co-researcher would move on from that assumption. The question was asked in order to discover how important her physical self was to each woman, and how she saw that aspect of her being in the world. But the phrasing of the question allowed the body to be left out of the answer.

The use of the term 'if' in the above questions led to responses to imagined situations, and not those that were personally experienced. This may be the reason for the wide range of responses discussed in the previous pages. It may be necessary to focus on

what was possible in personal experience, if only to have some sort of common culture /language /understanding to draw on.

Bracketing

There was another problem which became apparent in regards to the question of being bodiless, and that was the reinforcement of the duality concept of separation of body from self. The acceptance in the belief in the duality of the body and spirit which was the backdrop for the research in body image had been seen by myself as a severe weakness of that research. I believed that in this study the duality of the Cartesean split had been rejected, yet reviewing led me to realize that the questions themselves were still embedded in the doctrine of two worlds. In my work in movement counselling I had seen that many are, as in Elsie's description of herself, "out of tune" with their bodies. In seeking to have the body more listened to and more recognized as important I had stayed within the concept that somehow the body was separate from that which was listening and recognizing. The phrasing of the questions encouraged this type of thinking to continue with the co-researchers as well. If this pattern is to be broken a different approach must be used.

Short and Sweet?

The terms employed in the questions - such as "in one word or statement" - or the use of questions which could be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', tended to prompt shorter and more analytical responses than in the first study, "Feeling Good". Those questions which asked for descriptions provided longer and more in-depth responses. One exception to this was the question asking for a description of personal shape, as this question generally elicited one or two word replies. Perhaps shape was seen as such a straighforward 'fact' - "here I am; you can see what shape I am and therefore my perception doesn't matter" -that the co-researchers saw no point in belabouring the matter.

The fact that there were a number of questions to be considered may also have proved to be an inhibiting factor in the length of the responses. The co-researchers may not have expanded upon their initial replies because there was a perception that all the questions had to be answered in a relatively short period of time.

The quantity and quality of the responses was also affected by the lack of follow-up to what was presented by the co-researcher in her reply to the question. For example, when

Jean was suggesting that she carried herself "better" when she was dressed up what being dressed up meant for her was not explored. When Fern and Jean said that body image was what they looked like in the mirror what was seen in this looking was not investigated. Again, the number of questions to be answered and the format itself did not appear to lend themselves to digging deeper into the issues presented.

I was basically in the beginning of training as an interviewer. As more and more interviews were experienced it became more natural to seek out clarification and greater depth in follow-up questions. Even within this second study that process was occurring.

Present Tense

The wording of the questions generally solicited the feelings and understandings of the co-researchers at the time of the interview. This meant that the mood of the co-researcher, and the situations which surrounded her at the time of the interview, could influence the responses in a way that was not congruent with the individual's core being. For example, it may have been that something in Fern's life had happened which had made her very aware of her age, an experience such as the dying of a close friend. For the immediate time following age would be a predominant filter, but generally she may not have that system in place in her thinking. If the interview fell within the immediate time period mentioned, it would be natural for her to have this at the forefront of her responses. If the interview had fallen before or later than this occurance her replies may not have included any references to getting older.

Developmental Aspects

In the material provided by the co-researchers there appeared to be a consideration of whether body image was a 'trait' or 'state' characteristic. This question had also appeared in the review of the literature on body image theories and research. To some extent the co-researchers appeared to be agreeing with the reports of Cash (1990), Fisher (1986), and Occurrence (1989) as they suggested that a person's body image was stable over time. This was especially true with the suggestion by Fern and Gay that there was a point in their lives - apparently in their late twenties - at which their image of their physical self had consolidated. Although it was years later and they had changed in their bodies they still saw themselves as they had been then. On the other hand, Jean, at twenty-one, appeared to be

still in the process of adopting various aspects of her physical self as her own. The period of the twenties seemed to involve a 'becoming-trait' of body image.

In discussing what she termed the 'Pulling Up Roots' passage Sheehy (1976) referred to the early twenties as a time in which "we are earnestly in transit between the intimate circle of family and the adult world" (IBID,p.39). The main tasks of this transit time are to "locate ourselves in a peer group role, a sex role, an anticipated occupation, an ideology or world view" (p.39), all aspects of self-image which have a bearing on how we are perceived by ourselves and others physically. It is in this process that "we take hold of a provisional identity" (IBID,p.35). Sheehy suggested that this 'taking hold' occurred over a seven-year span from ages of twenty-two to twenty-eight. According to this theory the co-researchers were right on schedule.

Another aspect which might have been right on schedule as well was Fern's dissatisfaction with her being 'old'. She was very aware that she had slowed down in her movements. This appears to agree with Raiwet's findings (1990), where the "most frequent changes volunteered by the informants (included) a general slowing down", as reported by sixteen out of the twenty-two respondents (p.66). However, the informants in Raiwet's study "did not identify physical change as important in their lives" (p.67). This apparent difference between the participants in the earlier study and Fern might be simply the focus of the interview in "Questions". Fern was being asked to focus on her physical self, whereas in the Raiwet study the focus was on overall health.

Involved in the aging process is the relative gradualness of it, as compared to the sudden changes with which Hazel had to deal as a result of her accident. Work with amputees and leprosy patients revealed that one's body image constantly varied in order to correspond with changes which occurred in and to the body. The more rapid or dramatic those changes were the more the body image fell behind, but eventually it would adapt (Fisher et al,1958). From this work it would appear that Fern's picture of herself should be more congruent with what actually was than Hazel's. This did not appear to be the case. Both of the women were adjusting to the changes which had occurred with and to them. Fern still tended to see herself as she had been. Hazel appeared to see herself as she was day to day, without a set picture of herself. Although she referred to how she used to move she realized that was in the past, and now she was moving in a different way.

This discrepancy with the research on amputees may have something to do with

Hazel's age at the time of her accident. She was in her early twenties when she had been hurt, the period in which Sheehy (1976) had indicated the provisional identity was forming. This meant, according to the theory proposed in Passages, that she was at a critical period.

> Because the blow of a life accident hits harder if it coincides with a critical passage in the life cycle, it may force us to resolve the issues of that passage more effectively. (Sheehy,1976,p.22)

Having to deal with the issues of the passage of uprooting and, at the same time, cope with the repercussions of a major accident, may have forced Hazel into the creation of a body image which had adapted to what was sooner than might otherwise have occurred.

Perspectives/Aspects

As the co-researchers responded to the questions I realized that they were speaking to various perspectives of their physical selves. If they were relating to their state of health they might feel one way about themselves, but if they were focusing on how they moved they might have a different perceptive of their physical selves. Even with questions which seemed to be specific enough to result in a common focus - eg. "How would you describe the shape of your body?" - the responses indicated that there were a variety of ways to consider the question. In the example given there was the possibility of looking at the structure of the body, the level of physical fitness, or the quality of the body - i.e. strong. This wide range of perspectives needs to be kept in mind when attempting research on an aspect of self whose potential for interaction is considerable. There is a need to clarify which element of themselves the co-researchers may be thinking of; whether it be the appearance, use of the body or its parts, one's state of health, or another element which has not yet come to the fore. What the co-researchers were pointing out in this study was the need for constant clarification as to their perspective when answering a question. This clarification would appear to call for a high degree of reflectivity on the part of the participants.

Not only did the co-researchers indicate that there were a variety of perspectives with which to consider one's physical self, but there were also a number of aspects which could influence that perspective. Buytendijk (1974) referred to these influences as "situations of our bodily and personal subjectivity" (p.133). He talked about such situations

as being-hungry, being-awake and being-asleep. The co-researchers brought out situations such as being-active, being-healthy, being-tired, being-happy, being-focused, and being-comfortable. Buytendijk suggested that these situations involve a 'have' as well as a way of being. For example, in his research on being-hungry there is the aspect of having an appetite.

> The connection between the two seems so indissoluble that one usually, in the objectification attending the linguistic usage, indicates the hunger as a feeling. (Buytendijk,1974,p.133)

This manner of referring to the situations which they were discussing as "feelings" was seen in the descriptions given by the co-researchers. They tended to describe themselves as feeling happy rather than being-happy. Did this mean that there was a 'having' which was connected to the situations as having an appetite was connected to being-hungry? If so, future research might investigate what 'having' might connect with - for example - being-active.

As mentioned in the section 'Responses' there is an interaction constantly occurring between the perspective one is taking on her physical self, and the impact of the influencing factors. For example, if a person was focussing on the structure of her body, and was wearing something which was uncomfortable, she would likely see herself differently than if she was wearing clothing which did not impinge on movement. As Buytendijk (1974) stated:

> ... experience of existence in the world, the body appears in the aspect of a pathic (affectively-determined) being attuned, a being-moved moving itself, through variants in the functional auto-organization of bodiliness originating and changing with our lived and personally lived-through mood. (p.45)

The permutations and combinations which are possible because of these many interacting variables are almost innumerable. And there is at least one more variable which needs to be included, that of the importance-to-the-individual factor. As noticed in the responses of the co-researchers, what they pay attention to in their being is that which is important to them. For example, both Gay and Hazel had been working on their confidence levels in interacting with others and in movement. They therefore were aware of this factor in considering their physical selves. For these two co-researchers there was a belief that

they had been successful in their work, and that this was apparent in how they were in their bodies. If they had felt that they had not been successful, they probably would have perceived their physical selves in a different way.

Most of the body image work which has been done to date does not seem to take into consideration these many possibilities and interactions. The importance of the personal and external context in which research is done must be recognized. If the contexts are disregarded, as appears to be the case so far, then the 'findings' will not only be incomplete, but may also be in actual error.

The Self

The Spirit

Fern and Elsie had indicated that they did not only see a physical structure when they considered themselves, but they also saw their spirit, or psyche. In this research the term 'spirit' will be used, as for myself this term incorporates all the domains of a person, while at the same time alluding to an ability to transcend those same domains.

> ... man is a child of nature, subject to its vicissitudes, compelled by its necessities, driven by its impulses, and confined within the brevity of the years which nature permits its varied organic form, allowing them some, but not too much, lattitude. The other less obvious fact is that man is a spirit who stands outside of nature, life, himself, his reason and the world. ... a capacity for self-transcendence
> (Niebuhr,1941,p.3f)

When she considered her physical self Fern talked about having a sense of purpose. And Elsie referred to a strength that was hers even in times of physical fragility. The conversation with Heather had pointed out that when we state that we are our bodies, as suggested by Sartre and Marcel and others, we are likewise saying that our bodies are us. This means that however I perceive the spirit of my being, this is also how I will see my physical self. Research has found that it is the "global or core opinion that correlates with body image" (Steinem,1992,p.230). If a person sees themselves as a victim they will likewise see their body as weak. If they see themselves as capable people, then they will perceive their bodies as strong and agile.

In discussing this correlation Steinem, as with many others, referred to the

discrepancy of how others saw her and how she pictured herself. Others, including videotaped situations involving herself, told Steinem that she was pretty, slim and sophisticated. She saw herself as "a plump brunette from Toledo, too tall and much too pudding-faced ..." (Steinem,1992,p.227). The examples given in most of the work on body image are of this nature: perceiving oneself in a way which contradicts the 'facts' and which is generally negative. But this was not the way in which the co-researchers reported.

A key difference was that the co-researchers described themselves as being that which was important to them. When alluding to their spirit-incarnate they did not perceive themselves as ineffectual, but instead referred to being strong, purposeful, and helpful. They saw themselves in a positive light, and that light shone on their physical self in the same manner, and illuminated the same aspect. They saw themselves as being/having what was of core importance to them. In other areas of their being, both physical structure and spiritual abstractness, they may not have been so positive. But in this one factor which was basic to their 'selfhood' - in this factor they were pleased. The one exception was Fern, as she felt she had lost some sense of her purpose, and that troubled her. Yet even in that loss she recognized its importance, and her previous 'having' of this sense.

Another difference from the work reported by Steinem was the expansion of what is 'seen' beyond the structural self. Steinem did refer to carriage as well as appearance, but the focus remained on what was visually apparent. The co-researchers seemed to be alluding to a more nebulous aspect which would be discerned by other senses than the five commonly recognized. It is as if the spirit self has 'senses' which interact with the world in an analogous way to the senses of the body self. Perhaps this is how children and animals apparently instinctively know if they can trust another person. In having a metaphor for her body of a St. Bernard dog Heather pictured herself as someone who took care of others. Another person would not necessarily know this by simply by looking at her. Yet it is an aspect of herself which others do recognize: how that recognition occurs is unclear.

The field of dance-movement therapy is based upon the belief that such recognition of spirit can occur in the assessment of movement. North (1972) suggested that "we relate our body movement to our inner world" (p.3). Who we are in our spirit can be seen in our movement. This concept is not unique to the field of dance-movement therapy. A less acknowledged concept is that our spirit can be affected by how we move. It is this last concept which provides the motivation for dance-movement therapy. Under a title of

Theoretical Base of Dance-Movement Therapy Lewis Bernstein wrote:

> 'The individual in relation to self'. The individual is viewed as an integrated unity; mind and body reflect and effect each other. Muscle tonus effects the psychic attitude and visa versa.
> 'The individual in relation to the environment'. Mind, body, organic functioning, and behavior are interwoven with the environment.
> (Lewis Bernstein,1986,p.279)

This interaction of spirit and movement was seen in Jean when she described how she carried herself better when she was dressed up. It appeared that dressing up helped her to feel better about herself, i.e. 'lifting her spirit', and this change in spirit in turn affected how she moved, or carried herself. Dance-movement therapy incorporates movement patterns which would have at least the same impact as the dressing up, and then the same beneficial circle can occur.

Whether the focus is on the spirit or on the body, it is important to realize that we cannot consider ourselves as simply one or the other. The tendency of Western culture to disregard the spirit was seen clearly in most of the research and therapy on body image. Buytendijk (1974) provided an interesting analogy which warned how doing so missed the whole reason-to-be of a person.

> He who views a painting from a physical standpoint, can determine the dimensions, the weight, the statistical division of the colours, the chemical composition of the paint, but this aspect passes the work of art as such. (p.83)

World View

Part of the spirit of a person involves how they relate to what happens to them and to the rest of the world. Hazel, of all of the co-researchers the one with the most physical problems, described her body as a very positive "incredible". Hazel had chosen to regard what was happening in her physical being in the same manner which she chose to view all things: "there are hardships, but I will make it, and have fun doing so". Others interviewed tended to see changes in their bodies or certain health situations as limitations on how they were as individuals.

Antonovsky (1979) spent many years investigating how some people, in spite of

incredible difficulties, managed to stay healthy. From this work emerged his theory of 'sense of coherence', a

> global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that it is a high probability that things will work out as well as can be reasonably expected. (IBID,p.10).

According to this theory Hazel has a high sense of coherence, which in turn contributes towards her positive attitude regarding her body.

In the research which has been done to date on body image there has not been any taking into account an individual's 'sense of coherence'. A person with a low 'sense of coherence' could have a correspondingly poor opinion of her body, and visa versa, thus affecting her body image. For this reason a person's level of 'sense of coherence' should be considered as an independent variable relative to the dependent variable of body image.

Reconciliation

Fern had indicated that some sort of reconciliation between the person she saw in the mirror and the person she felt herself to be would be beneficial. In the first study Ingrid had talked about the "need to connect external and internal image of your body somehow". A healthy body image would thus be one in which the less-valued of the internal or external image moved in the direction of the more-valued. Fern saw her spirit - if that can be equated with the internal image - as active. She felt that she would be healthier if her external image - her actual physical structure - was likewise active. For her this meant that she would need to become more physically fit.

With primary anorexics it may be argued that their internal body image is the negative one in that they see themselves as unacceptably overweight. In this situation the

healthy movement would be to have this internal image move in the direction of the external 'fact', as it appears that the slimness of the body which they have is also the slimness of the body which they desire.

Acceptance of the Self

To see one's self as being what one desires was an important part of what was perceived as a healthy body image by the co-researchers.

In the discussion in 'Responses' on the supposed lack of change of body image there was the suggestion that there was a point in one's life where the basic body image coalesced. With Gay and Fern that time appeared to be in the late twenties. As mentioned earlier,that was the time suggested by Sheehy (1976) when a provisional identity was adopted. At this point in life "the widening and opening up of our inner boundaries makes it possible to begin integrating aspects of ourselves that were previously hidden" (p.139) In the past a person might have rejected a part of the body as not at all desirable, as Jean did relative to her feet. But in this time of adopting an identity it is important to incorporate into it everything which one is. This requires a type of acceptance of the previously-rejected. As recorded by other writers:

> In my language the horse is called 'medicine dog'. Riding on a medicine dog is balancing. You could never come to a proper balance without accepting the separated aspects of your being. And that means accepting the 'heava', the profound darkness of your own spirit.
> (Andrews,1986,p.55)

> ... the fully-expanded self who will take in all our parts, the selfish, scared and cruel along with the expansive and tender - the 'bad' along with the 'good'.
> (Sheehy,1976,p.250)

Both of the above writers are talking about an greater acceptance than simply saying 'my feet aren't so bad'. But that may be where it begins, and where it must continue. In a discussion earlier in this section there was an indication of how our spirits and our bodies interact. If we can't accept a part of our physical self then it is difficult to suggest that we are accepting all of our psyche. But if we can learn to incorporate all of our physical self then we are showing an acceptance of ourselves. Sheehy (1976) alluded to it being a 'provisional identity' in the late twenties. The quotation immediately above is in reference to the ages thirty-five to forty. And being balanced as mentioned by Andrews (1986) is a lifelong discipline. But the balancing and incorporation necessary for full growth cannot occur if the body itself is unwanted. This seemed to be the way that four of the co-researchers felt in their reply to being everything they were but without a body. In their replies they referred to the body as that which limited them, and that it was something with which they would be glad to part. If this was a deep and true feeling, and not simply an exploration of a fantasy, then it was a concern. And not only a concern to myself.

> I think of other women who give up body pride
> and even jeopardize their health by ignoring
> their physical selves, retreating into their
> minds, and trying to defeat the culture by
> treating flesh and skin as unfortunate necessity.
> What wonders have they and all of us been
> missing? What might we become if we were
> body-proud from the beginning.
> (Steinem,1992,p.238)

Fortunately, in other parts of the interviews the co-researchers had indicated that they hadn't, in fact, completely thought of their bodies as "unfortunate necessity". Indeed, it had appeared that Gay and Fern had accepted their physical selves in the the process of establishing their 'provisional identity'. In 'Responses' it had been proposed that this acceptance was basic to "some sense of ownership of their image" of themselves.

The above theory prompts at least two questions regarding people with eating disorders. The first question would be 'do these people have a sense of ownership as to their body image?' It has been suggested that anorexics behave as they do because in the area of their body they can show that they have control: they can decide whether or not to eat, regardless of hunger (Bruch,1973,Orbach,1982). But apparently this control is not over

'my' body. Anorexia nervosa is prevalent in North America and Western Europe where women:

> ... have learned to relate to our bodies in an objectified manner. We view and treat the body as if from the outside, as if through the eyes of others ... Our inability to name and describe our bodily experiences also alienates us from our sexuality which might enable us to transform our relationship to the body.
> (Szekely,1899,p.21f)

If it is not 'my' body but the body-for-others can an image of that body be 'mine'? Yet there does appear to be an adoption of a particular body image by those with primary anorexia nervosa (Bruch,1973). They have an established body image that they are overweight and too large. They hold on to that image regardless of the fact that it is not true/accurate. How can this occur if an established body image, as suggested above, rests upon acceptance? Might it be that this inaccurate body image has some aspect which is desired by the women in question? For example, with anorexics it has been suggested that - for whatever reason - they are seeking to remain in and/or recover the neutered state of prepubescence by maintaining a boyish figure (Garner et al,1983). But it is that very image of the boyish figure which primary anorexics deny is true for them. It is the image of being overweight which they hold on to as themselves. What could possibly be appealing in that image for these women?

Perhaps the women who see themselves as overweight regardless of how inaccurate that perception may be are subconsciously identifying with some aspect of 'fatness' which is positive and important to them, and therefore desirable. Maybe they would like to see themselves as independent of the cultural emphasis on slimness. Even as they are apparently focusing on attaining that cultural ideal they are maintaining their rebellion against it in their image of themselves. Although this theory may been overreaching its base the question remains: what is it which a person is actually describing when she talks about her body image? Might it be that she is in reality describing what matters to her in how she sees her whole self - her self-image?

Fern suggested that she needed to become more active so that her internal and external perceptions of herself would draw closer together. At the time of the interview she was not pleased with her physical self. In her study Raiwet (1990) found that her informants

only thought of themselves as healthy when they had adjusted their expectations so that they could still see themselves as able to do the work which was important to them. Raiwet's informants agreed with the statement at the beginning of this section in that they saw themselves as being the way which was personally desired. But what was personally desired had changed.

> The importance of types of work in the informants' lives changed at different stages. Some things decreased in importance over time and others took on new importance, thus their influence on health changed.
>
> (Raiwet,1990,p.62)

If Fern could change her expectations of her body she may find it easier to be more accepting of it. But once again the circular nature of living comes into play.

> The first step to change ... is accepting where you are right now. Completely accept your process. Negative judgements about yourself only hold the patterns in place, because the Basic Self can get very stubborn and defensive. Accepting yourself gives the subconscious child in you the space it needs to grow.
>
> (Millman,1991,p.140)

Others

The impact of others on how the women saw themselves was less than I had expected. When the opinions of others differed from that of the co-researcher the actual body image did not seem to be affected to any great extent. These women did not seem to let themselves be defined by the look of another (Sartre,1953). Steinem (1992) suggested two possible reasons for this apparent disregard by the co-researchers of others' perceptions of themselves.

> One's body image can be positive enough, and rooted deeply enough in childhood, to remain positive even in the face of society's quite different evaluation.
>
> (Steinem,1992,p.230)

In this quotation Steinenm was referring to the concept of core self-esteem. A high core self-esteem may be the reason why Jean and Hazel felt good about their thinness even when others suggested that it was unhealthy. Yet Jean also felt that others saw her as more

attractive than she did. Again the idea that there are different dimensions of body image appears. Jean's core esteem of her thinness was high, but her esteem regarding her looks was relatively low.

The second reason given by Steinem as to the light impact of others on the co-researchers' body is that:

> we are changing the self-consciousness of a spot light <u>on</u> the body for the self-confidence of a light radiating <u>from</u> the body. ... Instead of a light that is directed at us by others, a light that shines from within.
> (Steinem,1992,p.225)

The co-researchers in this study went the full gamut from not wanting their bodies at all to "the self-confidence of a light radiating from the body". Trying to decipher how one sees her physical self seems to be a complicated and multilayed project.

More Questions

Reflections upon the responses of the co-researchers caused me to form many more questions which I believe need to be investigated before any definite positions should be established relative to body image. Lack of such investigation will continue the superficial assessment of this important aspect of who we are and our being-in-the-world. Therapies based on such superficiality must, of necessity, be limited in their effectiveness.

One area which begs for further exploration is that of the multiplicity of elements which might be considered when focussing on body image, and whether those elements are 'state' or 'trait' characteristics. The responses given by the co-researchers suggest that their perception of their weight and the incarnation of important spiritual aspects were relatively stable once they were established. If this is true then therapeutic practices geared at changing these elements would need to be very strong in order to have an impact. Other elements of body image appear to be more easily influenced, particularly the aspects of movement and carriage. Even the aspect of physical structure was affected by the fit of the

clothing one is wearing. Further investigation might uncover other elements which contribute to a sense of the physical self. Some aspects which could influence one's perception of her physical self emerged in the responses, and others could be considered.

A recognition of the incarnation of desired spiritual or psychological aspects and the resultant impact on body image demands a reassessment of what might be meant by individual's descriptions of their physical selves. Perhaps an evaluation that the body image is distorted is incorrect, if what is actually being described is the inner sense of self projected on to the physical being. If this is so then attempting to help the person in question see herself more accurately will not work, as the picture described is already true to the spirit of the describer.

Not only is there a multiplicity of aspects of body image to be explored, but there is also the idea that there are various modes or dimensions of viewing body image which should be considered. The modes which emerged in the responses were health, movement, type of activity, and/or what feedback system was operating, such as the reflection of self seen in a mirror. One co-researcher also brought out the dimension of body image relative to her connection to her family. As with the possible aspects of body image there are a number of 'lenses' through which one might view her physical self. How important those lenses are to the individual, and how she feels about them at that moment in time, could also have a large influence on her body image.

The person's general attitude towards life could also impinge on how she sees her body in particular. For example,the person who sees life as an adventure may perceive herself - including her body - in a different manner from the person who believes that life is full of obstacles deliberately placed to stop one from having fun. A research question could beto investigate the possible correlation between general life attitude and attitude

towards one's physical self.

Another area which would benefit from further exploration is that of the possible timing of the maturation of body image. By the term 'maturation' I am referring to that time in a person's life when how she perceives her physical self appears to be set to such a degree that actual changes to/in that physical self do not necessarily affect the perceived image. This idea of maturation of body image emerged in the discussion of the possible trait nature of body image. In exploring the hypothesis that such maturation does occur the concept of various transition points in a person's life would also need to be considered. For example, if a person is at a point in her life, as was Hazel, where she is trying to re-learn various movement patterns, her picture of her body and its capabilities would be in a state of flux. The degree of change might necessitate a whole new maturation process, until the new physical being becomes the new physical 'self'. This could also apply to the possible impact of aging upon one's body image. Maturation may be a comparatively slow process which allows for continual small adjustments to the set image of the maturation period. Or the established body image of the late twenties may be strong that awareness of changes does not occur until the difference is so large between perceived and actual that the process must begin again.

These are some of the questions about body image which emerged from consideration of the responses of the co-researchers to the thirteen questions presented to them. There are many more possibilities for deeper investigation into this little-understood concept.

A Shifting of Focus

The original purpose of the studies was to explore what a 'healthy body image'might look like. The first study began with the bare bones by simply asking the two co-researchers to describe times of feeling good about themselves. Although this resulted in the presentation of rich descriptions and interesting analyses, there did, however,appear to be a loss of focus regarding body and body image. The second study was therefore designed to deliberately provoke more concrete and body-specific responses. The more analytical mode of responses given in this second study led to a concern that the important personal involvement seen in "Feeling Good" was missing. Often what seemed to be discussed in 'Questions' was a body image, not my body image as mine, and as me.

A third study was designed and implemented which returned to the format of the first study but was more deliberately focused on the physical. The phenomena explored were times of feeling physically healthy, times of feeling physically attractive, and times of moving well.

A factor which was common across the three studies was that the focus of the exploration, body image, was not seen as a thing separate from the 'self'. Deeper examination of this last aspect revealed a basic flaw in the perspective in which the three studies were embedded. An attempt had been made to operate outside of the split-world view of previous research, yet the questions of the second study, and often those used in the other two studies to help the co-researcher dig deeper, showed that the dualistic perspective was still strongly in effect. The goal of all of the research as outlined above indicated that it was thought to be possible to consider the physical aspect of one's self - the body - as a separate entity. That is, it was believed that a person could have a picture, an image, of a positively experienced body as a thing, an object called 'body image'.

This was not the understanding which was gained from the co-researchers in the first and last studies. The directives given in those two studies were employed to elicit descriptions of positive experiences of the physical self which could be examined to see how such experiences fed into a positive/healthy body image. I recognized that the research was therefore dealing with experiences that contributed to the forming of a body image, rather than the body image itself, but I thought that aspects of the latter could be teased out of the descriptions.

What occurred did not meet these expectations. The co-researchers did not - and perhaps could not - talk about their feeling good about themselves. They talked about feeling good, period. Direct references to themselves in these experiences did emerge, but in a very particular way. Rather than talking about themselves or their perceptions of themselves as nouns or things or images, they described times of being. In their descriptions of the remembered times they had shifted the content of the research from a focus on an object - body image - to a concentration on a verb - being. Instead of a healthy body image the material was describing times of being healthy.

This shift from the expected experiencing the self as a noun to the knowing of one's self as a verb was key to the phenomena of a healthy body image. Healthy body image was not an object to be gained and/or possessed, but was instead a way of being in the world. To coin a phrase, it was a healthy-body-imaging. Earlier research on body image had shown that a person could describe the noun 'body image', or at least aspects of it, when the awareness of it was negative. The concept of segmenting and isolating the body appeared integral to the awareness of the noun 'body image'. People could describe their image of themselves when they were talking about size or use of various body parts. However, when the co-researchers in the three studies described in this research were asked to focus on

times of positively experiencing their bodies they did not describe a thing but a way of being. When asked to consider the noun, i.e. how they saw themselves in those times, the experience fled, and they began to describe a less-than-positive self. The thing 'body image' was irrelevant, and maybe even detrimental, to the verb 'healthy-body-imaging'.

Upon further reflection I realized that both the noun and the verb had to be present for health, which was logical as the word health comes from 'hal', meaning whole. Perhaps there is a need to somehow talk about the noun 'healthy body imaging' and the verb - which is probably more like 'being healthy' than 'healthy-body-imaging' - all at the same time.

The responses of the co-researchers thus changed the thrust of the research from attempting to understand more about the thing 'body image', to exploring the 'being' of positively experiencing the physical self. This shift was reflected in the labelling of the first four themes of Study III: being congruent, being able, being alive, and being connected. The fifth theme - levels - was pulled out in recognition of the continuums involved in these ways of being.

BEING WELL - WELL-BEING

In this third study interviews were done with four women who were asked to describe remembered times of feeling physically attractive, physically healthy and moving well. As the transcript material of the subsequent twelve interviews was explored four common ingredients in being well, or well-being, emerged: being congruent, being able, being alive, and being connected. There also was a relativeness to the 'being', which became a fifth theme of 'levels'.

Being Congruent

In their descriptions the four co-researchers kept mentioning a sense of coming together, of fitting, and a sense of matching: in other words, they talked of a sense of congruency. At times in the interviews the women would illuminate the positive experience they were describing by comparing it with times when things weren't so right. The aspects which emerged which were congruent included that which mattered to the individual, the sense of self, an inner 'knowing', a matching of feedback with goals and standards, and a fitting together of all the pieces.

Congruent With What Matters

Each of the women interviewed indicated that in the times of positively experiencing her physical self she was doing and being that which was important to her personally. In some ways this agreed with what had emerged in the second study.

When Ingrid was describing times when she felt physically healthy she constantly reiterated how important it was for her to be "in an active mode".

> (Is that just a physically active mode?)
>
> No - it's mental. Being physically active
> and doing it outside for me is to be part
> of the world and gives meaning to my life.

In one of her descriptions of feeling physically healthy Ingrid talked about being in the mountains. What she was doing and how she was in the doing of it matched with what

mattered to her.

> It is breathing fresh air. It's so beautiful around me. I feel strong because I'm physically active and I'm taking this mountain. For a longer period of time, like I hike for hours and hours. I feel my body being active.

Not only was Ingrid being active but she was in a natural outdoor setting which contributed to her sense of well-being. And she was a part of the social world in a way which she desired. This latter aspect became clearer as her description of the time and place became more detailed.

> The time I remember best was in September with the Skyline Trail, with Ryan and his room-mate. That was just about perfect. The weather was great; a little cold at night but nice. I felt good and we walked for three days. A quite good hike. I felt very close to Ryan. Of having very good contact with Ryan. Enjoying the scenery.

For Ingrid everything that mattered to her was right; it was congruent with how she wanted it to be. Each part had come together in a way which was "just about perfect".

What mattered deeply to Connie was that her ability to be active was not impeded in any way, as she brought out in her description of a time of feeling physically healthy.

> I can go out and I can move where ever I want. And I can do whatever I want without feeling limited by my body. And I can take in what I want from the environment. Listen to the birds. Or I can get over to that tree. So my body doesn't limit me from doing anything I want.

When Connie could do what she wanted - which was to be active and open in the out-of-doors, without any limits - her desires and the experience were congruent, and she felt good.

For both Ingrid and Connie being active and having no interference to that activity was an important part of the positive experiencing of their physical selves, because these were aspects which mattered to them. Further discussion regarding these elements is done under the theme "Being Able".

Sharon also wanted to be active, in her case "very active in sports and music." Integral to this activeness was what mattered to her spirit, as brought out as she described times when she felt physically attractive.

> ... a quality of - elegance has a certain
> quality to it. A rich feeling, in the sense
> of a full wholeness, richness of experience.
> I am alive and I like to be vital. I think
> that energy and that vitality comes through
> and so the physical expression of that means
> I am not unattractive.

In her description of a peak time of feeling healthy Sharon recalled how what was happening perfectly matched what was important to her; with what she most desired to be and experience.

> Light - the part of it. A vividness.
> The experience of the out-of-doors. Of
> everything around me as being vivid. A
> vividness to everything. I suppose you
> could almost put it like a spiritual
> experience. That everything - the grass
> was greener, the sky was bluer, everything
> was vivid.
> It was more than just being happy. There was
> a vitality there. I really experienced
> everything that day - almost a physical
> experience of everything. In the sense of
> the affirmation of the beauty of the
> morning and the brightness of the sky and
> the loveliness of the world around me. And
> just feeling great inside.

There was a vitality and richness of experiencing, an aliveness which led to Sharon's "feeling great inside'. As with Ingrid, everything was right - within and without.

Being active, being fully alive - these were important elements to Joan as well. As she described a particular time of moving well Joan also highlighted how important it was to be in a mode of enjoyment.

> I perceive myself moving better when I'm
> enjoying it; enjoying the company, enjoying
> something about it. Something very central
> to what ever I am doing (so that) it seems
> less like work and more like play.

This element of enjoyment continuously emerged in Joan's descriptions of times of feeling good about her physical self. When what she was experiencing matched with what was "central" to her - enjoyment - there was a great deal of positiveness. Again, with moving well:

> It was more than just elation of going well. Very at ease, very happy in myself. Being very high at those points. Enjoying that feeling.

Joan described her sense of enjoyment as more than a vitality of experiencing which Sharon had mentioned. There was the element of play mentioned earlier, of fun.

> We rode small enough distances each day such that we could do a lot of things at night after we had finished riding, which was a lot of fun. We could play in the creeks and we could go into Banff the night of the hot springs.

The elements of aliveness and enjoyment and play resurface in the discussion of the theme of "Being Alive", as their importance to all the co-researchers emerged in their descriptions.

All four of the co-researchers emphasized that being in the out-of-doors was important to them. This was mentioned earlier with Ingrid, and highlighted by Connie when she said that "for (her) what (she) wants is to be able to go outside". Although they did not specifically state this importance to themselves in their descriptions both Joan and Sharon were outside in most of the times which they recalled. Being outside mattered, and when one was able to be outside in an active, playful and vital way everything fit together. This importance of nature to the phenomenon of well-being is discussed in more depth under the theme of "Being Connected". It is included here because it was the congruency of the experience with what mattered to the women which contributed to the feeling good.

Congruent With The Sense of Self

Awareness of what matters to an individual is part of a sense of who that person is. In describing times when they felt good about their health, appearance and movement the co-researchers indicated that what was occurring agreed exactly with a positive self-image. A matching of positive self-perception and other-perception of self was part of the phenomenon of well-being, as can be seen in Ingrid's description of a time of feeling

physically attractive.

> I can feel myself walking and feeling attractive. Part of it is that I can feel someone looking at me in a way that makes me feel that he finds me attractive. That's part of the feeling.

Ingrid also described a time when others' perception of her did not match with her self-perception.

> At a birthday party, when I was maybe fifteen or sixteen, we imitated each other's walk. And I was shocked: this girl imitated me and I thought that it can't be that bad and everyone said: 'Yes, that's exactly the way you walk'.

This was not a time which Ingrid chose as one of well-being, but instead it was selected by her as a backdrop against which the times of well-being could be more clearly seen.

In her description of feeling physically attractive Joan also brought up the impact of others' perceptions of how she looked. In her case when there was a lack of congruency regarding how she felt she was and another's perception of her, the latter appeared to have little impact. What mattered was her sense of herself, whether that was as "feeling so miserable", or the opposite end of "the good feeling when (she) looked in the mirror". This was seen in Joan's description of a time of not feeling good, and how she responded to the comments of a friend.

> We met, and he said: "Boy, you look really good, but yesterday on the phone you sounded really bad". And I got very little satisfaction from him, hearing him saying I looked good, because I wanted him to think of how bad I was feeling. It was a nice compliment, but I didn't feel that attractive.

As with Ingrid in the time described earlier, there was an incongruency between self-perception and others' perception of self, although in this case it was the co-researcher who was being the negative party. Even when how others saw Joan agreed with her positive

picture of herself the sense of well-being didn't seem to have much to do with what other people said.

> ... no one that I remember at all told me that I looked good. It was just that I knew it. Perhaps when I got home I may have asked Brad if I looked good, but it wouldn't have meant much, just that I was getting the strokes that I was already giving myself.

The lack of impact of other people's comments also was seen in Study Two.

Sharon also indicated that feeling good about herself involved a resonance with her sense of herself, but she deepened what had previously been described by the other co-researchers relative to what that self might be.

> ... perceive an individual as having something beyond the detail, the matter that we are made up of. Of having a soul. That essence that's me surely enters into all this in ways that we just don't understand fully. The interaction of body and mind and spirit. So that any really vital experience, as far as I am concerned, has a spiritual element.

When Sharon felt that what was occurring matched with who she was as a person she was defining herself according to this "interaction of body and mind and spirit". This was seen in her description of a time of feeling physically attractive. When describing herself wearing a favorite green dress she said:

> It is a whole feeling. I have a feeling that it goes with me. It's an expression of who I am. If something I'm wearing really feels good and I feel good about it I thinks it's because it's an expression of who I am.

Sharon went on to clarify how having an important ingredient of elegance was part of this agreement of self-perception with what was happening.

> Elegance. That is the feeling I have about myself in some things, like this dress.
>
> (Can you dig a little deeper into that 'elegance'?)

> I just mean looking good in a situation and feeling good. More than looking good: it's a feeling of congruent. That the inner feeling you have about yourself and the way you look are together.

In Study Two Fern indicated that a reconciliation of what was desired with what was seen would be part of a healthy body image. Sharon's description of 'elegance' appeared to match that picture.

The sense of not being hindered, discussed earlier as an element which mattered to Connie, was also expressed by the co-researchers as not having anything extra with which to contend. When Joan used the metaphor of music to attempt to clarify her feeling healthy she indicated that the music would not be "too intricate, too heavy". To be true to what she was experiencing the music would need to be simple and straightforward.

In her description of being physically attractive Sharon described the dress in question as being simple, with no fussiness to it. The dress was congruent with herself and what she did. In their home everything was to be put away. Once the newspaper was read it went out to be recycled. The look of the rooms was to be uncluttered. Nothing would be present which was not supposed to be there.

This sense of neatness was shared to some extent by all of the co-researchers. The concept of nothing being there which was not supposed to be present may account for the importance of leanness to the participants in times of feeling good about themselves. All of the women related positive experiences of their physical selves to times when they were lean, whether focusing on their actual weight, or being streamlined, or in being able to see the definition of muscles. In describing a time of feeling physically healthy Joan said:

> I remember looking down at my legs and they were brown and muscular. It was the lightest weight I have ever weighed since I got to 5'8". The two weeks had gotten rid of excess I didn't need. My legs actually had a dent in them where the calf comes up. They had actually dented and then the quads. actually started. That was a very positive thing to see.

Joan referred to the weight she had lost as being "excess". It seemed that those particular pounds were not part of herself, and therefore could be jetsamed without concern,

as they were not essential to who she was. In fact, it was positive for her to see that this loss had occurred. This may have been so because the change in the outer self, which she could see, more closely matched an inner nature which she equated with her self.

Each participant related the positive experiencing of her physical self not simply to a loss of weight, but to that loss as part of meeting activity challenges which she had set for herself. In this they were being true to how important it was to all of the co-researchers that they be active. In the time mentioned above Joan had just finished a two-week cycling tour in the mountains. Connie related skiing every day to her feeling of well-being. Ingrid's peak experiences of feeling good occurred when she was involved in physical training. And Sharon enjoyed walking as part of her daily regime.

The 'self' which the women described as being matched by the situation in the times of feeling attractive, healthy and well-moving was a 'self' which was accepted and appreciated by the co-researcher herself. The concept of the necessity of self-acceptance to a sense of personal well-being was alluded to in the first study, and clearly brought out in Study Two.

According to at least one of the co-researchers in Study Three a good portion of self-acceptance was needed before positive feedback from others could make much of an impact, although such feedback could contribute towards eventual self-esteem. The area which appeared to be most vulnerable to a lack of self-acceptance was that of attractiveness, as most clearly revealed in Ingrid's comments.

> It's kind of weird that there's
> something in me that never really
> believes it, that I'm physically
> attractive. There are times that
> I can feel it, but down deep inside
> I don't really believe it.

Having received a comment from a friend about her being good-looking Ingrid expressed that her initial reaction was rejection of the statement. Her initial response was to wonder why that person said such a thing. Ingrid did, however, feel that perhaps such comments might "help you to feel attractive at other moments", thus helping to build up a picture of one's self which could be more easily accepted by the individual.

The idea of this acceptance occurring as a result of a developmental process was described by both Ingrid and Connie as they compared earlier and present times relative

to the concept of being physically attractive.

> I think through the years I've built a certain feeling of attractiveness, at a certain level, and it is certainly higher than it used to be when I was a teenager. When I first started looking at myself I found myself very, very unattractive. That has changed over the years. Just by accepting myself more as a person with value in herself.
>
> At this point in my life I've gotten used to my body and I accept it the way it is. The things I didn't like before that I thought were ugly - like my short little fat legs and things like that - now they don't bug me and I don't even care if people think they're short and fat. But I would have cared before when I was younger. I think that when I was younger I would have looked more at just the outside of me when I thought of being physically attractive. Whereas now, because I've come to accept the way I look - this is my basic package and I can't really change it - it's more how I feel.

Connie recognized that the way she was really could not be changed that much, and that recognition helped her to accept her "basic package". For Ingrid this realization occurred at the end of her high school years. She had lost a certain amount of weight, gotten contacts, let her hair grow to a preferred length -

> but I was never going to have curls and my nose was never going to have another shape than it does. So I think in a way that period made me realize my physical limitations, and I was as attractive as I would ever get.

But both Ingrid and Connie went beyond looking at their "basic selves" as indicated in their concluding statements. Not only had they recognized their physical limitations relative to how they looked, but also each of them saw herself as "a person of value to herself". They appeared to be agreeing with Sharon's concept that their self was beyond and

deeper than their physical package. The women indicated that at least part of the developmental process which resulted in them being able to accept themselves involved looking through their physical surface into what was brought out in Study Two as their spirits. Sharon clarified this fullness of self-acceptance in describing times of feeling attractive.

> I was good-looking and had that good
> feeling about myself. It was more
> than skin-deep. I had a positive feeling
> about myself and the things I was doing.

But it was Joan who most graphically highlighted her sense of self-appreciation as she described a time of feeling physically healthy.

> It was just like being in the mountains.
> It was awesome. It was magnificent. But
> it wasn't outside: it was inside. It was
> me! It gave me the same feeling as what
> happens now when I go into the mountains,
> and it hits me how wonderful it is. Only
> what hit me instead of the surroundings
> was me. That I was this incredible thing.

Congruent With What Is Right

In the times being described by the co-researchers there was a certain internal awareness which was expressed by them as a 'knowing', a knowing which recognized that what was personally right was occurring. Little, if any feedback from others was required in this 'knowing': it was within the individual herself.

> People told me after the fact (that I
> looked good). But I knew it myself.
> I didn't need to have them tell me that.
> I already knew it, I already felt it.

Even before other to her that she was attractive Joan 'knew' within herself that it was so. How this recognition was experienced varied. Joan was the most graphic in her description of knowing rightness, both in moving well and in looking good.

> When I knew everything had come together
> and I had done it well and I was feeling
> really positive about it. You know how
> you get chills up and down your spine, or
> tingling. When something makes you very

> happy you just tingle. When I mentally thought: "this is good" it was just sort of a tingle went out from me. Sort of a self-squeeze.

This "self-squeeze" resurfaced each time Joan talked about times of feeling healthy, attractive and of moving well. This was her way of knowing that what was occurring was right for her. The other co-researchers were not so explicit as to how they could tell - in themselves - that what was happening was the way it was supposed to be. There seemed to be simply an awareness that it felt good, as Ingrid expressed when talking about a time of moving well:

> It feels good, It feels like it is a good run. To me it feels like the way I should be running.

Sometimes that awareness of feeling good was expressed by contrasting it with experiences which had not been so good, as with Connie when she was describing times of feeling physically healthy. She was describing how, at the time of the interview, she was aware of herself as being "pudgy". For her pudgy:

> ... is the opposite of trim. Like when you are exercising regularly and you feel your muscles are toned up you feel trim because it's not mushy. Now they are mushy. Tight isn't the right word, but when they are toned up they just feel good.

Trying to expand on what this 'feeling good' was like generally resulted in a sense of frustration on the part of the co-researchers, because words were simply inadequate. This was seen in Connie's description of a time of feeling physically attractive.

> You feel really good. Your body feels really good and everything. And your mind feels really good. Like everything fits together. You just feel great.

Connie couldn't find a clearer or different way of expressing how she knew that what was happening was congruent with what was right for her. It was just "really good" and it felt great. Feelings were feelings and words were words, and rarely, if at all, did the two meet to any degree of satisfaction.

Again, one way in which some clarification occurred was through the process of

contrasting. The 'feeling good' at times involved a sense that what had previously been wrong was gone, or was not present at the time being described. For Sharon this was experienced as a sense of freedom that was a part of her feeling physically healthy.

> It was a sense of being freed from all
> that. That kind of whatever that was,
> it was gone. A sense of release. This
> was a walk that was marvellous. Everything
> was just marvellous.

After times of moving well Connie was aware that something which was normal yet negative for her was missing. Again, she had described herself as feeling "really good", and then went on to expand on that good feeling by saying:

> All my muscles are loose and everything
> relaxed and so a lot of the tightness in
> my shoulders and stuff is gone.

For Joan the experiencing of the congruency of what was happening with what was right was recognized as a 'self-squeeze'. For the other co-researchers it was simply expressed as a 'feeling good', sometimes expanded to a "sense of release", or "everything relaxed". A deeper understanding of how this 'feeling good' was experienced is attempted in the following discussions of the other themes. The concept is brought forward here in its aspect of fitting together with a known rightness.

As noted above, how that rightness was known was difficult to put into words. As expressed by Joan:

> It was a deep-seated thought that came
> from I don't know where. From external
> stimuli as well as internal - telling me
> that is felt good. It was good.

What that rightness was appeared to be a little easier for the co-researchers to zero in on. When the negative aspects mentioned by Sharon and Connie above were not present there was a conviction that what was happening or how the person felt was the way it was supposed to be. As Sharon described, when going deeper into a time of feeling physically healthy:

> It was as if suddenly there was a
> wholeness, a completeness. A feeling
> of well-being that I hadn't had in a
> long time. A feeling that this is the

> way it ought to be all the time. That this is the way I ought to feel all the time. And I had forgotten that this was how it should feel.

In recalling her adult life Sharon had found it difficult to pinpoint many times of healthfulness, because for much of that period she had been experiencing varying degrees of illness. In India she had to cope with the illnesses which were part of being in that country. When she returned to Canada she found that, although those illnesses were not present, she was not able to do the things which she had done before, and she was not clear as to why. She described how she felt as having a sense of "strangeness" within herself. It was strange when compared to how she had been when in India. It was even stranger when compared to her memories of herself as a young person. Then she had been "alive, vivacious. Alive to the situation". In the time of strangeness Sharon found it difficult to put one step in front of the other - a significant contrast. Long before the medical world had gotten around to acknowledging that something was amiss in her body she had known "that something wasn't right". In her description of a time of wholeness, some of which was quoted above, she stated that "the strangeness, the knowing something wasn't right - it was gone". Again, what was right in the experience was the absence of something wrong.

That rightness also included an awareness of returning to a better way of being.

> ... a feeling of well-being that I hadn't had in a long, long time. Of returning to something.

Sharon was returning to this "feeling of well-being" after a long time of being away from it. She later indicated that she probably hadn't felt that well since childhood. For the other co-researchers the time of being absent from what was recognized as right was not so prolonged, but was also intensely experienced. Joan brought this out in describing a time of moving well in which she suddenly realized that she had recovered from a shoulder injury.

> The shoulder injury that summer hindered me a lot. It made my running very awkward because I couldn't swing my shoulder. I couldn't move very well. And so I was surprised by the feeling of moving well. I didn't feel any pain whatsoever. I had a sensation of just elation, happy that I could move well again. It had been six months since I had felt that I was strong

and in control of what my body was doing
or had a flow to my body. I was saying
(to myself): "Yes, this is nice. Yes,
this is the way it should be."

Joan knew that what was happening was 'right' because she could once again move as she had before. Not only was the pain of the injury absent, but there was also an awareness that the movement itself was back to what it had been before the injury had occurred. Once again she was experiencing the movement as it "should be". But it was Ingrid who most clearly traced out how this return to a "familiar feeling" was perceived in times of moving well.

... that familiar feeling of the movement.
It comes back like refreshing the memory,
and not just in my head, but in my whole
body, in my muscles. And what it is like
is as if you are reconnecting, or
reactivating old patterns. It's almost
like a feeling in your legs of "this is
what it's supposed to be like".

For Joan and Ingrid the "familiar feeling" involved a returning to the memory of times of doing and feeling right, according to the performing of certain motor patterns. Sharon seemed to be establishing contact with a sense of well-being which was deeper in herself and perhaps deeper in her past. A time which Ingrid recalled raised the question that perhaps the familiarity which the co-researchers were describing had as its base memories the natural goodness of themselves as felt by young children.

When I was five or so I used to go down
on Sunday mornings when my parents were
still in bed and my brothers and sisters
were still in bed. Go down into the
livingroom and dance in my petticoat, and
pretend I was a ballerina. I am sure that
at that time I thought I was moving well.

Sharon also referred to a rightness in how she carried herself when feeling good.

Carriage. That's a good old-fashioned
word. A certain way of carrying one's
self straight. Inside I feel that way.

Others of the co-researchers in Study Three also indicated that a certain posture and way of carrying themselves was part of their feeling good. They were aware of a sense of

easy uprightness as an aspect of well-being.

As indicated earlier the awareness that what was happening was congruent with what was right was intricately bound up with the co-researcher's previous experience and knowledge of the activity in question. This particularly came forward with Joan and Ingrid as they described times of moving well.

> It all clicked. Everything came together. Suddenly when it was there it seemed that my motor skills now knew what it felt like to be flowing properly or moving well. As soon as I was moving very well I could feel it; I could tell. You may not know what it's like until you can actually perform it once and know what it feels like. It's not a muscular feeling whatsoever. It is something that comes from your mind. When I am cognizant of it I am out of my body saying 'Yes, this is nice. This is the way I should be', rather than looking inward and seeing my muscles and knowing it's right that way.

> It's just a nice feeling. It is sharp. You know exactly the timing. You know exactly when you are doing what part of the movement and how it's supposed to feel. You know it's the power and the combination with where the blade is supposed to be and the angle of the blade and when it hits the water what kind of splash you get. You know what it's supposed to be like. It is almost like you have this picture of the perfect movement in your head and you're approaching it. It feels good to be able to know the whole move. And to know where in the move you are and what you are supposed to be doing at that moment.

There was "a picture of the perfect movement" which was overlaid with the movement which was actually occurring, and it was an exact match. In the instances described above knowing what that picture looked and felt like was based upon previous experience and teaching. Perhaps the 'knowing' that she looked attractive which was quoted earlier from Joan's description likewise had its comparison with an internal "perfect picture" which she had of herself and likewise had an exact match. From the transcripts of the

interviews the compiling of this 'picture' appeared to incorporate what was necessary to meet important external goals. In times of well-being the feedback which occurred indicated that what was required, technically or otherwise, was happening.

Congruent With What Was Required

As mentioned above, sometimes the co-researcher became aware that she was being healthy or moving well because of a contrast with what had been happening before. The 'wrongness' was missing, the normal "shaking on all my joints" was changed to having it all "really work". At this time of well-being the individual was made aware that she was doing/being the correct technique of that skill or activity. Knowing what was right in this case was connected with what was required to reach an external goal or meet external criteria. As expressed by Ingrid when describing times of physical health, there was "a feeling that everything functions well". The 'perfect picture' of the way it was supposed to be matched the picture of the way it was because one was doing what was needed in order to perform correctly. And both the internal and external occurrences gave feedback that this was so. In describing her sense of moving well when rowing Ingrid said:

> I know that I am rowing technically
> well because I can get the transfer
> from my feet into the boards. And
> from my hands, from my body movement
> into the blade. I can feel muscles
> in my arms and muscles in my legs
> just executing the power. I can see
> my blade making this strong move in the
> water.

There were at least two ways in which Ingrid 'knew' that what she was doing was what was technically right. She had the knowledge which she received from the feedback of her muscles and her eyes, and also the knowledge which she had of the proper technique involved in rowing. The proper technique which she had learned about in her training was "the picture of the perfect movement" referred to earlier. The learning of the correct technique had allowed Ingrid to create an image of a whole picture of the movement in such a way that she could identify when the seeing and the doing of the action by her matched with that picture.

Often the picture of how it should be was connected to more general concepts of

movement. Ingrid had referred to specific details of the transfer of power from parts of the body to the blade of the oar. But she also referred to the strength of the movement of that blade in the water. The awareness of this strong action was also part of what Joan brought out when she described a time of competing in swimming, when she realized that she was moving well.

> Being able to pass every single person
> throughout the whole time. Partly
> achievement-oriented. But there was also
> a lot of power and feeling very long in
> my stroke. Smooth. Each stroke was pushing
> me that much further.

When trying to travel in any manner it is necessary to push away in order to go forward. Joan could feel herself doing this, which contributed to her sense that she was moving well. Good technique is simply doing that which is required in order to be the most effective and efficient. The descriptions provided by the co-researchers sometimes sounded like a book on - for example - a good running style, as here with Ingrid:

> My stride is good, relatively large.
> My knees go up higher than when I am
> just jogging. My legs are strong, and
> my body feels like it is in good position.
> I am leaning forward a little bit. It
> feels good. To me it feels like the way
> I should be running, like the way a good
> runner runs. My upper body is quite
> relaxed. My legs are doing the work. And
> my lungs are healthy enough to keep up
> with the work that my legs are doing.

At times there was a conflict between knowledge of what one was doing relative to the proper technique, and how one felt that the action was performed correctly. Ingrid had seen videotapes of herself running and knew that she had a tendency to direct her feet slightly sideways instead of the push directly back which is required to propel herself forward. Yet she could still feel that she was running "the way a good runner runs". Even though cognitively she was aware of her error she felt right, partially because of the feedback she received in the activity. This feedback was made up of both externally and internally recognized cues.

> I ran faster than I had done before. I had a good pace and my legs were strong.

It was not only the technique of a particular motor skill which was mentioned by the co-researchers. When describing times of physical attractiveness the women had definite opinions as to what was required, which 'picture' they needed to match. This included not only the exterior aspect seen by all, but also an interior awareness of themselves.

> I have a criteria of looking neat and clean and - more than that though. Of coordinated. Colour coordinated and coordinated feeling with myself.

> It has to come from inside. If I feel really good inside it's usually when I'm fairly fit. Because then I feel really toned up and good. Then I would feel physically attractive more often. I have to feel fit. Because my body has to feel good as well as my hair or shirt. It has to be all together.

> It's kind of like you identify yourself with pictures of models you see in the magazines. Not on a conscious level. It's more of a feeling that you could fit into it. Describing it as model is almost too concrete. It's more of a feeling. More of a feeling of a good-looking body that I fit into. Can melt into.

Although the topic of physical attractiveness would appear to encourage the engendering of concrete 'requirements', as with earlier material it was the 'feeling' aspect which the co-researchers returned to again and again. Even when all of what was technically required was there and was happening as it should, without a certain feeling well-being wasn't experienced. As Connie stated: "It has to come from the inside".

But an awareness that what was required was, in fact, what was happening did seem to be part of the co-researchers' descriptions of positively experiencing their bodies. It was this matching with the activity which made sense out of the following description.

> (My body) feels sweaty and warm and tired and healthy.

Ingrid had just completed a sixty kilometre cycle and was enjoying "the feeling of having used (her) body". Therefore, for her at that time being sweaty and warm and tired was a feeling of health, of goodness. It fit with what she had been doing. Joan had also referred to a cycling activity in her description of feeling physically healthy. In her case it had been a two-week bike tour through the mountains. As with Ingrid, on that trip Joan had enjoyed:

> the sense of wellness that you get when
> you go to bed at night, totally exhausted.
> You couldn't move another muscle if you tried.

Ironically, at the time of the interviews for this study, Joan was once again experiencing being totally exhausted at the end of the day, but in a different way. She was suffering from depression, and the tiredness that she felt did not match with what she had done during the day. It was the incongruency of how she felt with what she had done which was so negative for her. In contrast, when the tiredness from working hard matched with what she had done, she felt positive about it.

The response of her body to the meeting of the requirements allowed Ingrid to operate well in what followed immediately after.

> I still feel warm. Such an activity really
> gets your body temperature up. I notice that
> the feeling of health, of being warmer, gives
> me more peace to sit down and work.
> Concentrate on my work.

This overflowing of the sense of well-being into meeting the needs of the next activity was noted by the other participants, including Connie in her description of times of moving well. In talking about a time of cross-country skiing she recalled how she had felt at the end of her ski day.

> The rest of me just feels loose and relaxed.
> I feel like I can sit down and take it easy,
> I would go straight from skiing and sit down
> at my books. And I wouldn't have any trouble.
> Like skiing for three hours and then with
> half an hour of stopping sitting at my desk
> and working. My mind is clearer. Although
> I feel relaxed and laid back I don't feel
> sleepy. Then I could sit down and work for
> half a day.

Not only during the actual time of moving well itself, but even after it, the co-researchers were aware that they were doing and being what was required. In the positive experiencing of their physical selves they were being congruent with what was demanded by the skill or occasion.

Various feedback mechanisms helped the co-researchers to realize that they were meeting the external demands. In previous sections of this theme there had been brief descriptions of times of awareness of the proper technique occurring. There were also desired structural changes which occurred with the co-researcher when the time of the activity in question happened over a period of time.

The structural changes mentioned earlier which occurred when one was doing what was necessary were not limited to those seen by others. Connie talked about her internal physical self operating in a desired manner when she was regularly participating in cross-country skiing. In describing times of being physically healthy she said:

> I was really fit. I never got a cold
> or anything. I wasn't sick. And I
> felt healthy.

Connie's improvement in her all-over fitness level resulted in everything operating better, to the point that she could effectively resist the communicable diseases which were around.

Ingrid also talked about operating effectively as she brought out how her kinesthetic feedback would vary according both as a result of what had been happening before, and within the activity itself. In the times of feeling physically healthy which she recalled in the interview she had been doing what was necessary to take care of herself. She had been exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and working at an optimal level. One way in which she knew that this was happening was that "the feedback feeling from (her) muscles to her head was stronger" when she was doing an activity such as soccer. In the phenomenon of feeling healthy she also talked about a time when she was hiking in the mountains, and she noticed:

> That I feel my legs being strong.
> I can make every next step when I'm
> going up. And they are getting
> stronger too while I am doing it.
> The major part is that they are
> strong right now. Right when I am

using them. And I get that feedback
from my legs that they are strong.

More discussion regarding the difference in levels of fitness and feedback, and how those differences impact on being well, occurs in the theme 'Levels'.

In times of well-being the co-researchers were aware that what was happening was congruent with what was required in order to perform correctly, and that specific feedback helped them to know that this was so.

All The Pieces Fit

In times of moving well, or feeling attractive or healthy, there was a sense that all the pieces fit together as they should. The relationships between people and/or things at the time being recalled were the way that they should be; that is, the way that was desired by the co-researcher. The aspect of relationships to other people was emphasized by one of the women in her selecting times of team work as remembered moments of moving well.

Rowing is not an individual sport so
it probably hinged a lot on everybody
else as well. It was one moment, one
piece when the whole timing in the boat
was identical, everybody caught at the
same time, moved at the same time. It
all clicked. Everything came together
and it was smooth. Everybody was moving
at the same rate, at the same time.

How important this synchronization was to the phenomenon of moving well was also brought out by Ingrid when she talked about times when it did not happen.

I think it feels good as long as you
have the control over it, have the
power to do it. And it's going well.
And that depends on the other people
in the boat too. Because if there are
people in there that are doing the wrong
technique then you can't - the boat is
falling over to one side and you don't
have enough room to lift your blade here
so that it comes out of the water ...
then it is not feeling very good.

As Joan indicated, part of "feeling good came from everyone around" and the sense

that the movement of each one of them fit together to create the 'perfect picture' discussed earlier. And, in the situation Joan was describing, the moving well of the rowers led to the moving well of the boat.

> Striving for the feeling of just being
> one person, or one object moving in the
> water. The bubbles underneath. I think
> the first sign any rower feels good is
> when they can hear the bubbles and think:
> "Oh neat. We're finally getting the boat
> to ride well".

For Joan, in this time which came to her as one of moving well, it was the riding well of the boat which registered more than her own movement. This sense of becoming and being one is discussed in more detail under the theme of 'Being Connected'.

Not only was it important to be working as a team, but it was also necessary to be relating well as people in order to experience well-being in a situation. Ingrid brought that out in part of her description of hiking on the Skyline Trail. She stated that she:

> felt very close to Ryan. Of having very
> good contact with Ryan.

This good contact was seen as an integral part of her feeling healthy. This was true of Joan as well, likewise seen in a description of feeling physically healthy.

> Usually we did a fair amount of squabbling
> amongst ourselves. But this morning
> everything had got rectified again by the
> end of the practice. So when we were up
> there it was just very light, bubbly,
> happy conversation we were carrying on.
> Very positive.

Not only was it important to have relationships fitting together in a certain way, but the co-researchers indicated that concrete things also had to gel appropriately in order for the participants to feel good about themselves. This especially came out in a description of times of feeling physically attractive. With Sharon and a green dress:

> It's not fussy. Straight lines, and so
> it makes me look a little bit straighter.
> When I'm wearing something like that I
> want shoes that are attractive too. The
> look is whole. It has to look whole.
> Not just the dress but the shoes and a

feeling of carriage.

In order to feel right about her appearance Sharon needed all the parts of that look to match, to come together. For Joan this meant that:

> nothing sticking out, nothing out of place. It all fit together very nicely. It wasn't that anything stood out; it was just that the fit was so good. The shape of the clothes showed rather than the shape of my body. I had sort of an architectural look. The jacket I had on had quite big shoulder pads. And so it gave me a definite shape. And the skirt was very long, continuing the line down.

Ingrid described that, in the rowing, if anyone had "stood out" she would have thrown the boat off balance. Perhaps Sharon and Joan were saying the same thing. If anything stood out it threw the 'look' off balance, and they couldn't feel attractive when that occurred.

Part of the need for such non-standing out appears to be a feeling regarding the necessity of being appropriate to the situation, one's role in it, and one's shape or style. In talking about another dress in which she had felt attractive Sharon described it as:

> ... a very rich feeling dress. Very nice, very good body to it. It's one of those kind of dresses that I think I could wear now. Except if I did wear it to anything - it has to be an occasion to wear it. The wedding I went to the other evening was too casual a thing for anything so fancy so I didn't wear it.

There was a sense that had Sharon worn that particular dress to a more casual wedding she would not have felt attractive, but rather would have experienced it as being-out-of-place. Not only must the look be co-ordinated within itself, but it must also match with what is happening in the situation. And if this match is made then the look itself may not matter so much. As expressed by Connie:

> Because I can have something really dirty on and dirt all over me and still feel attractive - if I was digging in the garden. If I was dirty somewhere else I

> wouldn't feel attractive because it
> wouldn't fit.

Part of the look being appropriate to the situation is whether or not it is also appropriate to the role one has in that setting. In the times in which Sharon remembered being attractive she was in a noticeable role. In one situation she was the mother-of-the-bride, and in another she was the wife of the moderator. Although she was not the 'star' she was a supporting actor. She "felt good in those role-playing situations because of the way (she) looked". She could shine because her clothes fit together so that no one part stood out. Her clothes had to fit the situation as part of her feeling appropriate to her role.

Joan underlined how what she was wearing could actually help her project the role she desired to have.

> I saw myself in the mirror and thought:
> "This is right. This is a good look. I
> look good". I looked very connected, very
> solid. I wanted to come across that way to
> the people I was going to be meeting.

In another setting Joan was more aware of the good physical shape she was in and wanted to project the role of an attractive woman, rather than someone who was "solid". Her description of what she was wearing in that situation was different from the previous time of wanting to convince people of something. As her roles varied, what helped her to feel attractive in those roles also changed.

But it was when all of the pieces came together, when everything was right, that the co-researchers seemed to feel best about themselves.

> But at the top of the continuum - the
> times when everything meshed together
> just perfectly - is when I'm very
> physically active. (Meshed?) The way
> my body worked and my mind worked
> together, and what was around me. So
> that everything was right.

> It was Easter Sunday, cold but sunny.
> We were singing ... a group of friends
> that we did things together. Everything
> together gave me a feeling of joy.

My memory of the whole occasion was one
that was very warm and fun and really
special. And I felt right at home in that.

The weather conditions were right, the right people were there, the activities were right, and all the relationships were right. It all fit together. It was all congruent.

Being Able

In the previous discussion about 'Being Congruent' another theme was mentioned, that of 'Being Able'. When the co-researchers were matching with what mattered to them, with their sense of self, and with what was needed in the situation, they found themselves able to do so because they had certain abilities. These abilities of which they became aware were not limited to matching the situation, but interacted with it. Sometimes their sense of well-being was based upon becoming aware that they were and/or had certain desirable qualities, such as strength or charm. At other times this meant an appreciation of what they were able to do because of this. These qualities and abilities were found across the domains of the physical, the mental, the social and the emotional.

Having and Being What It Takes

As mentioned above, in describing the times which they recalled, the co-researchers indicated that they had a different sense of themselves from their normal state. They had become aware that they had within themselves qualities which were brought out by what was occurring at the time.

Physically

Whether they were describing times of feeling physically healthy, or physically attractive, or of moving well, the co-researchers talked about having certain physical characteristics. Apparently these characteristics were seen as desirable aspects to have and be as they were included as integral to the times of well-being. A characteristic deemed as important for Joan and Ingrid was that of strength or power.

When I just go out for a run and it's
fresh and everything is working well.
I am not tired. It's just great. I feel
like I have power with every step I make.

> I am not pushing it; it kind of comes automatically.
>
> It felt good. I could feel very much my arms being very strong. I felt like I had a lot of pull through the water. A lot of force through the water.

The activities that the women were mentioning - running and swimming - required strength and power in order to be performed well. As was brought out in the previous theme, being congruent with the demands of the task was part of the feeling good in doing it. But the enjoyment of feeling strong was not limited to the actual times of moving well. In describing an experience of feeling physically healthy Joan talked about a time when she was sitting down in her livingroom, relaxing.

> I just knew that my body was healthy. It was strong. It was powerful. It responded.

Joan knew that she was strong even though she was not at that moment doing anything which called for strength. For Ingrid this was also true.

> I think for me that is what is healthy. A feeling that everything functions well. A feeling that (my body) is strong. The blood flow is strong.

At the time of feeling physically healthy the co-researchers had a sense of strength within their bodies which meant to them that everything was functioning well and that their bodies were able to respond. They recognized not only a use of physical strength as in the previous quotations, but also a potential of strength to handle possible future demands.

Other statements within the interviews would indicate that what the women wanted to be able to respond to was the demands of particular activities, for example, running and swimming. In the 'moving well' segments quoted earlier it was during the movement itself that the co-researchers had became aware that they had the strength and power to do the movement. In the 'physically healthy' section immediately above the participants had become aware after the movement that they had been and therefore now were strong enough.

As indicated above this sense of strength in past and present also fed into the future as the participants described a sense of having reserves of strength that would allow them

to choose their intensity levels.

> The intensity level with the swimming and the running was very much inside. I felt that my reserves were very strong as to what speed I chose or what energy I chose to expel at that time.

One was able to choose how hard one would work not only because of a reservoir of strength available to be called upon when needed, but also because there was a well of energy. Feeling as if one had a continual spring of free-flowing energy was also part of the co-researchers' descriptions of times of physical well-being. Connie highlighted this in her talking about a time of moving well in skiing: "It (the experience) feeds on itself and I feel like I could go on forever". With everyday restrictions being absent there were no blockages within and therefore the flow of energy was natural and effortless.

For Sharon the energy found expression as a sense of vitality and aliveness. Other co-researchers used the actual term 'energy', and talked about how much of it they had and what feeling that energy gave them.

> When I say I was feeling good that 'good' means - feeling energetic. Feeling that I could do anything that I wanted to do at that time, and all my body would work for me. I would just have to decide what I was going to do and no matter what it was it would turn out O.K. I would have the energy to do it.

Again there was that sense that there was a reservoir of energy just waiting to be tapped. In the time being described above Joan did not necessarily need that energy in order to perform a physical skill. She was recalling a time of feeling physically attractive, and it was when experiencing that phenomenon that she felt this sensation of being energetic. The whole "goodness" she was referring to just prior to this statement was clarified by the statement "that 'good' means feeling energetic". Perhaps she was referring to the ease of being that Ingrid brought out in comparing some not-so-good times with others in which she felt she was moving well.

> Sometimes I just feel heavy and sluggish, like I want to go for a run and I want to feel good but I

> don't want to put the effort into
> it. It's because I have to put effort
> into it because it doesn't come by
> itself then it's hard. But sometimes
> I go for a run and it goes easy by
> itself because I have more energy.

This concept of things being easy to do comes up again under the theme 'Being Alive'. Having the energy so that things 'go by themselves' and therefore take basically no effort meant that the individual could go on forever. There appeared to be no limits to what was possible.

> I could have run for miles that night.
> I had bounds of energy. It never ended.
> It would just keep going. The energy -
> just a lot of it. I think it would be
> psychological as well as muscular.

Here Joan appeared to be recognizing an interweaving of the physical and psychological, or mental, in connection with the energy of which she had become aware. This experiencing of energy in the whole self was also shared by Connie. In talking about how she was after a good session of cross-country skiing in which she had felt that she had moved well Connie stated:

> It doesn't make you feel energetic but
> it makes you feel energized so that you
> can do whatever you want. Not necessarily
> run around the block because you've just
> done all this exercise, but mentally you
> feel alert.

In their descriptions of times of well-being the co-researchers also talked about knowing that they were physically capable and that they had the abilities to do what they wanted to do. This sometimes meant that they recognized that they were physically fit enough to do what was necessary.

> My legs are doing the work. And my
> lungs are healthy enough to keep up
> with the work that my legs are doing.

Being fit enough allowed Ingrid to perform the skill correctly. With Connie her fitness level allowed her to perform the skill in such a way that she could get to the point of flow which would permit her to experience moving well.

> If you're healthy and that includes being fit enough to be able to ski more than fifty feet without stopping to breathe, then you can ski with a rhythm where you don't have to stop.

Being physically capable also meant that there was an acknowledgement by the co-researchers that they had the skills required for the task. This came out most clearly when the women were talking about times of feeling physically attractive.

> So physically I was very active in sports, right through and up into college. And generally speaking I was good. Certainly there were others who were better at both sports (baseball and basketball) than I was, but still I made the college basketball team. I was good enough. So I felt good about myself that way too. That I had abilities. So that enters into it.

For Joan it was the fact that she "was managing to do this without any trouble" that helped her feel proud about herself, and attractive. She was dressed up for a special occasion, and -

> I can remember not being clumsy. Because I was wearing high heels that I wasn't used to. I was quite happy that I wasn't being clumsy.

Joan was pleased with herself because she could manage to manouver in awkward footwear without tripping over herself. This pleasure in herself contributed towards her feeling good about herself in other ways, so that she could feel attractive. Connie's pleasure in her ability led her to see herself as physically healthy when she was climbing a mountain.

> It feels healthy to me because I can do it. It's not a strain. I can keep full up. I can push my body a bit and still feel healthy. Because my body is capable of doing what I am pushing it to do.

Knowing that she had what was needed, that she was fit and skilled enough because her "body (was) capable" of maintaining her pace - this was all part of Connie's feeling

physically healthy.

In the capability mentioned above it was important to the co-researchers both to be able to use their bodies, and to know that their bodies were being used. As Ingrid was describing a time of moving well when cycling she indicated that "it's a feeling of using my body and making it move". For her there was:

> ... an overall feeling that exists
> when I am healthy, when I am working
> out and able to use my body.

As mentioned in the earlier theme, it was important to Ingrid that she be able to use her body. Having the ability to do so allowed her to be congruent with what mattered to her. Part of the well feeling about one's physical self was to be this sense of the body as 'used', not only for Ingrid, but for the other co-researchers as well. Perhaps the 'being used' was linked to the concept of being productive which Joan brought out as important in describing a time of moving well.

> I was conscious of my own body. It
> was the strength I felt in my quads.
> as well as in my arms that felt good.
> A slight burning sensation in the
> quads. and in the forearms which made
> me feel mentally that I was working
> hard enough. I was producing.

Again, there was the combination of the physical and mental awareness of capability which contributed to or was part of the phenomenon of feeling good about one's self.

Mentally

There was also a way of being which fell more specifically under the realm of the mental domain, and this was the sense that one was in control. Within the self was a capacity and/or way of being that contributed to a sense of being in charge of one's self in a situation. When Joan was talking about having the energy to do whatever she wanted she also indicated that she:

> ... would have the knowledge to do it.
>
> (What knowledge?)
>
> Whatever I tried it would come out.
> It would work for me.

Joan had a sense that, at this moment of feeling attractive, she knew whatever she would need to know to make things work. This helped her to feel "in control of (her) situation".

An aspect perceived by the co-researchers as part of feeling positive was that of having choices in what they were deciding was going to happen, and how. The more choices they knew they could make the more control they felt they had and the better they felt about themselves. Although there may have been external stressors, such as with Joan in making a presentation or with Connie in adjusting to the terrain, in times of well-being these stressors were perceived by the participants as being self-selected. In this way what could have been a problem was instead considered as an exciting challenge.

For Ingrid the element of choice appeared at times to be more relevant to having a sense of control of her own thinking. This came out as she was describing moving out of a time of feeling unhealthy by doing what she described as self-talk.

> "I am healthy. I am strong and relaxed".
> And I just keep repeating that to myself.
> And I'll get better. It's as if I climb
> over a feeling; get on top of it. Which
> gives me a feeling of control. The picture
> that I have of the illness is put in a
> framework of non-control. Mentally I had
> a feeling that I had more control over it
> when I could relate it to stress.

In times of well-being the co-researcher taken a particular attitude which allowed her to feel good, and the taking of the attitude let her know that she was in control. She had chosen how to approach what was happening.

This had come out in the earlier theme where Ingrid had indicated that she had chosen to accept herself "more as a person with value in herself". Relative to her appearance Ingrid had facilitated that perception:

> I stopped looking in mirrors that made
> me look bad.. The mirror that I used to
> stand in front of when I was a teenager
> ... the light coming from outside always
> made me look terrible. At one point I
> decided that, well, it doesn't really
> matter. If I can look in the mirror and
> feel good about myself even if I don't
> look different to people around me at least

I feel better.

The effect of deliberately choosing how one would approach a situation was best described by Joan in her recalling a time of moving well, in her first triathlon competition.

> I went into it with a very nonchalant attitude. I was not prepared to put out my all, although I wanted to do well. I wasn't going to do a wet change and run and jump on my bike with a wet swimsuit on. I was really calm about the whole thing.

In her decision of what approach she would take to the competition Joan reflected the expectations which she had of her own performance. She did not expect to do all that well as that was her first competition of that sort. She decided that any demands which would be made on her would be made by herself. Joan deliberately chose to perceive the purpose of the competition as one of fun. That particular selection of a goal of having fun placed her in a mind-set which allowed her to enjoy what she was doing and what was happening around her. This enjoying what was around was picked up in her description of swimming breastroke in the competition, and how doing that stroke had made it easy for her to look around and see what was going on. Indeed, it was important that she be free to choose which stroke she would use. She took advantage of that fact to change from the front crawl to the breastroke in order to "get over the tenseness and (it) also helped me to think about my swimming and not about the competition".

An important part of the positiveness of the whole experience for Joan was the sense of control she had felt by being able to select her attitude and sticking to that attitude throughout the competition. That mental control was reflected in her physical control as she felt herself moving well.

This self-selection of attitude and a resultant sense of confidence was also reflected in one of the times of feeling physically attractive which Joan described.

> I was going to be the speaker, the only speaker. I was sure that I was going to do a good job. I was very comfortable.

At this time, as in the triathlon competition mentioned earlier, Joan was at ease with what she felt was required of her. She decided that she was able to give a good

presentation, and of persuading her listeners to a particular course of action. On the other hand, when competing in her first triathlon competition she did not feel called upon to perform extremely well because of her novice state. Her confidence and her level of comfort was not totally dependent upon her knowledge of her own ability. It also included her choice of how she would approach what she was going to do. She set her personal expectations at such a level that she knew she could meet them, and thus she had removed pressure which might have been distressful.

The "nonchalant attitude" espoused by Joan in the competition did not exclude the setting of goals and strategies. She had determined, both in advance and as she went along, what mind-set would facilitate having fun while doing reasonably well. The importance of the choice of attitude relative to striving towards a goal resurfaces in the discussion of the theme of 'Being Alive'.

Socially and Emotionally

In the interview relative to feeling healthy Ingrid described a time when she felt the opposite. In being shunted from one medical department to another she sensed that she did not have control of the situation and that feeling of lack of control had contributed to her having a feeling of being unhealthy. She had to rely on others for her treatment,and they did not interacted with her in a positive manner. In a similar way Sharon had to rely upon others in a particular situation, and she described how that had affected how she felt about herself.

> Probably I felt a little inferior at the other (wedding). In certain ways. A certain feeling of this isn't my world. And I'm not quite sure how to handle this world. So I probably wasn't quite as comfortable.

This discomfort was later contrasted with how she felt when being at another wedding. This second wedding was part of a time which Sharon selected as one in which she felt physically attractive.

> And I felt right at home in that. I didn't feel inferior or out of place or unable to cope with that situation. (I felt) that I was capable.

Sharon recognized that she had certain abilities and feelings that let her "cope with

that situation". Being capable and coping well with what was happening was important to all the co-researchers in their times of feeling good about their looks, health, and movement. And this gave them a sense of confidence which they enjoyed. In describing a time of moving well Joan stated:

> ... it was more just elation of going well. Very at ease, very happy in myself. Very confident in what I was doing. I was confident in my ability to move, as well as my motor patterns moving well.

When Connie was recalling a week in which she had felt attractive she noted that:

> I had more confidence in the way I walked, the way I did everything with my body. I didn't slouch along. I was standing up straight, and my shoulders weren't hunched over.

Connie felt able to do everything she was doing in a good way, and the confidence that that gave her was revealed in her carriage.

Joan credited being in the mountains with her sense of feeling capable in remembering a time of feeling healthy. That summer had been a very positive one for her in that she had been to a music camp for three weeks and then had come home and packed and left for the bicycling trip through the mountains. For her, being in the mountains brought the whole together and infused her with "energy and vitality".

> It gives me energy such that I feel I can physically do a lot more work. That mentally I can handle all my problems or any problems that I should ever encounter.

As in the quotation by Sharon earlier, Joan felt that she could cope and cope well. She felt that she had the energy and the ability to handle whatever came at her. This sense of confidence in herself overflowed into her relationships with others. In describing a time of feeling attractive Joan stated that she realized:

> that I was looking good. I was communicating with other people, and getting goodness from them. They seemed to respond with a lot of energy

to the energy I put out.

Connie described it as:

> I would have more confidence when I was talking with people. It made me more assertive, I suppose. Because I felt good about everything about myself.

All of these things: feeling at home in the situation, knowing that one could cope well with what occurred, and interacting with others assertively yet still "getting goodness from them" - these all fed into a sense of being able and competent which was key to the times of feeling good about themselves.

> Self-contained in that no one was externally saying 'you can do it'. Inner motivated. I feel an inner reserve. I smile because I feel that 'Yes - somehow there is this inner reserve to draw on'. Very confident.

What One Is Able To Do

In the times of feeling good about themselves not only were the co-researchers aware that, within themselves, they had and were what it took, but they also became aware of what they were able to do in order to handle external demands. At times the handling of those demands was facilitated by changes in the external environment which removed elements which had been perceived as hindrances to feeling good. The aspects of what one was able to do appeared to fall into two of the different domains of being - the physical and the mental.

Physically

For both Ingrid and Joan their times of moving well included an awareness that they had "made it in one of our best times". They were faster in their running than they remembered being before. And not only that, they found that they had the ability to keep the pace which they had set for themselves.

> My legs are doing the work. And my lungs are healthy enough to keep up with the work that my legs are doing.

> I gauged some of my running skills onto a girl I train for rowing with. Being able to stretch my length out because she is in much better shape than I. Being able to keep up. To talk the whole way as well as feeling very light on my feet. At the end of the run feeling comfortable enough that we pushed the last mile. And being able to keep up with that.

Both co-researchers realized that they had moved up a level in their performance of a particular skill. They recognized that they had not only improved for that moment in time, but that they were able to remain at that level over a particular period. They were "able to keep up with that". In that mode of well-being they performed better than they had before. In the next section under 'Being Alive' there will be a discussion on how that improvement occurred in a natural and comfortable way, without the pushing for it that is so much a part of our training mentality. For now we are simply acknowledging the presence of the improvement, and how that was part of the feeling good.

Recognizing that there was improvement gave a sense of accomplishment to the co-researchers. In the situations being recalled they had not consciously sought the faster times. It was in the concluding of the activity that they became aware of their achievement.

Unlike what is above regarding moving well, part of feeling physically healthy was the reaching of consciously-set goals. In the experiences described by the different co-researchers there was often an aim to achieve a specific objective, and being able to do so reinforced their sense of feeling healthy. Joan talked about one such time:

> I rode from Quebec City to St. Johns, Newfoundland, on my bike. Climbing a hill going up to the top of Funday Bay. You get just clearing over the top and you can see the road starts to go down. It's just a wonderful high. You've done it. It's terrific. And you're smiling from ear to ear. Puffing like crazy, but smiling from ear to ear. You've conquered this thing and you're on top of it.

It was not so much a sense of improving which lent itself to the feeling good, as it was an awareness of an ability which allowed one to do what she had set out to do. It was

not that Joan had gotten better as much as she had used what was already there. The particular bike trip described above followed others of similar length and difficulty, so that Joan had some background to determine her probability of getting to the top of the hill. Because of her fitness level and her understanding of cycling she had been able to experience the thrill of 'conquering' the hill. This thrill fed into the experience so that, in spite of the hard work it took to get there, it was perceived as recreation in its true sense.

In the formerly mentioned situations it was something of a surprise to the co-researchers that they had made a faster time. To some degree they had been unaware that they were able to do this. It was only when they were not trying that it happened. Yet in the attaining of a goal described by Joan, she had believed that she was able, she tried, and she succeeded. Both ways of being come into play at different times and ways of well-being.

One important aspect of being able to do something was that of being able to choose and be where one wanted, and doing what one wanted to do. In some ways this reflected the being congruent with what mattered, which was discussed under the previous theme of 'Being Congruent'. For each of the co-researchers it was important for them to be active and in the outdoors. For Connie, the ability to do this emerged as part of her sense of being physically healthy.

> When I'm outside I feel great because
> of the trees and the little creeks
> running by and the snow's there. So
> I feel really good mentally as well.
> Because I have access to that because
> I am fit. Because being physically
> healthy is being able to do that sort
> of thing, and go out and experience
> that, and feel it.

Other co-researchers mentioned the importance of being where they wanted to be. In many ways their descriptions of what was important to them regarding being outside was similar to what will emerge in the treatment of
the theme of 'Being Connected'. What is important here was the ability of the co-researchers to deliberately select where they would be, rather than the response to their being outside which will be discussed later. One of the reasons that the women were pleased with themselves was that - by virtue of their physical health/fitness - they were able

to choose to be outdoors.

In the description above Connie was physically able to be and do what mattered to her because she had previously been active enough to become physically fit. As she indicated, it was hard to separate one factor from another, partially because "everything fits together". There was also the difficulty relative to time, in that there appeared to be a positive cycle of one feeding into another which fed back into the first, and so on. Being active lead to being fit which in turn lead to being able to be active, thereby increasing one's fitness level, mentally as well as physically. And Connie's active participation in this cycle was part of her feeling healthy.

Ingrid brought out how that participation was seen by her as part of being in control, an element of ability which was discussed earlier.

> I think being (in the mountains) in
> itself is an expression of control.
> 'I can do it right there and then
> with my body. This is what I can do'.
> I think it is the ultimate expression
> of being in control, when you are
> doing it.

The sense of being in control emerged out of the doing, yet entered into her thinking as a mental knowing of what she was able to do.

Sometimes whether or not one was able to achieve one's goal was affected by external factors. If one's choice was restricted by external forces goals might be set which were beyond the comfort zone of the co-researcher. This led to a feeling of pressure which was not perceived as beneficial. In the case described below Connie is talking about backpacking experiences.

> When I am climbing a mountain my legs
> will hurt at a certain point. My muscles
> do. But if I am not rushed and I can
> stop - then I feel O.K. I can climb some
> more and I can look at the flowers and
> then I feel O.K. again and then I climb
> some more. And that's O.K. because it
> isn't interfering. But if there is a time
> limit on my getting up that hill so that I
> couldn't stop the hurt would get too much
> and that would interfere with my getting
> where I wanted to be. I wouldn't feel
> healthy because it would be interfering.

If Connie was free to choose the rate at which she would climb she could enjoy what she was doing and feel healthy in the process. There was a certain level of hard work which was seen as challenging and not distressful. If her choice of pace was interfered with then she "wouldn't feel healthy".

Part of the reason for a sense of well-being was the perception of the part of the co-researchers that there was a lack of interfering elements. In the situation outlined above by Connie the experience was perceived as positive by her when no one or nothing was trying to affect her choice of pace. The importance of this lack of interference was also seen in the appreciation of being alone on the ski trail as compared to the crowded weekend use of the area. There was a being comfortable and an awareness of freedom of movement, both physical and psychological. This freedom of movement was even reflected in as basic a choice as what one would wear. Although all the co-researchers alluded to wanting to be comfortable in their clothing, Connie was the clearest in her description, particularly when referring to clothes which she would select to wear in order to feel attractive.

> Probably baggy clothes. Because they don't interfere with the way I move and sit. Dresses bug me. They interfere with being comfortable, because you have to wear different shoes. And that interferes with how you walk.

In the earlier part of this discussion there was a reference made by Joan to how well she felt she handled wearing the type of shoes to which Connie was referring above. Sharon had described how the matching of that kind of footwear to what she was wearing was important to her feeling attractive ('Being Congruent'). It was not simply what one had on, but whether or not the wearing of that apparel interfered with the doing of the activity in a comfortable manner. The lack of interference apparently did not guarantee a feeling of attractiveness. Joan talked about how she felt at the time of one particular interview:

> I am wearing my grubby old running shoes, my husband's socks and my grey sweatpants which are my fat pants because they expand very well. I am wearing a hand-me-down T-shirt and I am wearing a bright green sweater. It's very bulky; it's very thick. Not to say I feel bad when I am in bulky clothes, but today it feels bad. Other times when I feel comfortable I'll wear

> baggy clothes and I'll feel good about how I look. But today I am wearing baggy clothes because I feel baggy.

The clothes themselves did not automatically decree how the person would perceive herself, as the wearing of the clothes was interpreted according to the present state of the individual.

The sense of being free of external hindrances extended beyond being free to move easily in one's clothing, or being able to set one's own pace. It also applied to the condition of the environment itself. Because many of the times being recalled by the co-researchers occurred outdoors the weather played a big part in the experiencing of the physical self in a positive way. It could be cool, or even cold, as long as one's movement was not overly impeded. More discussion regarding the impact of the weather on well-being occurs under the theme 'Being Connected'.

If there were no restrictions in the surrounding environment which might hinder what one wanted to do, then a sense of well-being was facilitated. If the environment actually helped one in her goal, it was even better. For example, good snow conditions are a definite advantage when cross-country skiing.

> I can feel the snow, good snow. It's really soft and I just go on without any effort. The snow doesn't stop me. There is enough snow so that I am not hitting ice.

Mentally

Having the ability to cope with what was happening was part of the sense of being in control, as discussed earlier in this theme. There was a confidence that what was needed in the situation was readily available to and within the co-researcher. This confidence required a certain self-knowledge, as well as an understanding of the possibility of gradients in the demands of the situation. Both of these elements were clearly described by Connie in her analysis of what being healthy involved:

> Maybe if you are healthy you don't set your sights higher than subconsciously

you are aware you can do. I never wanted to climb straight up a two thousand foot vertical peak. My body couldn't have done that, but I never had a desire to do it. If what I wanted to do was impossible for my body then I wouldn't feel healthy because I would be frustrated.

Connie placed demands upon herself such that she would be optimally challenged. Being able to meet external demands by adapting was part of the challenge. In times of moving well her skill level allowed her to adjust to the differences in terrain and snow conditions.

> Moving well is being able to adapt. I am on a flat and I have this nice little dip, so I adjust the way I am skiing. I can sense that change. I don't consciously think 'step differently here' when it's just the little ups and downs. Yet I do. So probably some of the good feeling of it is that I'm going along and I can change to adapt to that terrain without having consciously having to say 'I must put my weight here and my arms here'.

Connie could adjust to what was happening because she knew the movement patterns so well that she automatically took into consideration the demands of the environment.

Sometimes there was a more direct interaction of the demands of the environment and the mental state of the co-researcher. This became most apparent when the women were describing times of feeling physically attractive. For the co-researchers some of their times of attractiveness involved, to varying degrees, times of being in the limelight. At the moments being recalled the co-researchers felt very able to handle being focused upon. Indeed, the aspect of being looked at was an important ingredient of the phenomenon of feeling attractive.

> The fact that I was moving and that people could see me was quite a bit of it.

> I was at a gathering and I was walking up and I was wearing red. I stuck out in the crowd. But I felt very comfortable

> with that. Another time I was standing
> out too. I was going to be the speaker,
> the only speaker. In my mind's eye I
> was very comfortable. I was very at home
> sticking out. I was very comfortable
> showing off.

The women involved expressed the fact that usually they don't like to stand out in a crowd. But it appeared that how they felt about themselves at that time allowed them to feel comfortable when others were looking at them. How they were at that moment permitted them to handle well the limelight, and to benefit from others' consideration of them.

Being Alive

In describing their times of feeling good about themselves physically the co-researchers brought out a sense of aliveness which appeared integral to the phenomenon. This aliveness was expressed in ways which at times appeared contradictory. Deeper reflection revealed that all of these aspects were indeed part and parcel of the same sense of being vitally alive. The aspects which the co-researchers described have been labelled as follows: an easiness, a vitality, a release, and an awareness, with the overall recognition of the importance of feelings.

An Easiness

In times of moving well and feeling physically attractive or healthy there was a sense of everything happening in an easy way, without any real effort on the part of the co-researcher. The most powerful images which emerged from the women's descriptions regarding an easiness had to do with movement, whether they were talking about being healthy or moving well.

> As you are skiing you can feel the snow.
> Good snow. You are skiing on velvet and
> you just keep going. The snow doesn't
> stop you. It's almost that once you get
> going you can float through it.

For Connie the snow conditions were just right and the striding movement of cross-country skiing became so smooth that she experienced it as floating. This sense of

smoothness was important to Joan as well.

> It was the first time I felt my body,
> not effortless, but smooth and rhythmic.
> It really seemed to flow.

Although she did not feel that the movement was effortless it was easy because it was happening so smoothly. As Joan described later on, in talking about a time of doing the breastroke in swimming, there was a:

> ... smoothness of going through the
> motion. All the joints very fluid
> in their workings.

For Joan, as with Connie, there was nothing within herself or outside stopping her from the easy action of flowing. Even her joints were 'well-oiled'. This gave a freedom and a looseness to her movement. This easiness was emphasized by comparing it with the sense of plodding and effortfulness she normally experienced.

This sense of flow and smoothness was not limited to the experience of the movement patterns. As Connie described, it involved her whole self.

> You just flow right along. When you
> feel healthy there is a smoothness to
> the way your body moves and operates.
>
> (And it's not just movement you are
> talking about?)
>
> No. It's internal feeling which then
> comes out your pores. It comes from
> inside. It's more than just your
> muscles. It's how your mind is
> connected to it all together. That's
> part of the internal part too. It's
> the feeling of how it all meshes
> together and flows better.

There was an underlying awareness by the co-researchers that although what was happening was easy to do, it was also effective. Joan noted that in a time of swimming well she felt very long and streamlined, an important ingredient to the act of easily cutting through the water. Even on land this sense of length was a part of her moving well, perhaps connected to the fluidity of her joints and their free action.

As noted in the previous theme, 'Being Able', the co-researchers often became aware

that they had improved in their performance, and this in a time when they felt they weren't really trying at all.

> I wasn't pushing myself to the limit. Perhaps I was and didn't think in my mind that way. Because I made a very good time on that swim.

> We were running through the ravine. We were chatting like crazy and it was a very easy run. And we made it in one of our best times ever. I don't think I thought about my movement very much. It came very naturally rather than a forced movement.

What the co-researchers were doing was so effective that it had been performed in the "best times ever". At the end of the activity the women were surprised to discover that they had performed better than they had anticipated. Actually, there hadn't been any anticipation within the activity. It was not until they had finished that there was a realization of their effectiveness, and therefore improvement. During the activity of running or swimming they were not anticipating as they did not have any end-goal. They were simply in the moment of doing.

> I don't have this goal that I want to run seven kilometres today, or I want to bike from here to Amsterdam, or I want to swim a kilometre. I just go there and enjoy the moment of making this movement.

In times of moving well Ingrid was there simply to "enjoy the moment". When Sharon was talking about a time of feeling healthy she described her walk at the time as easy, floating. She then compared it to her normal way of walking, highlighting the impact on her of having a goal, some place definite to be.

> I tend to walk with a purpose or walk fast. I sort of feel hidebound to get there. I probably don't relax enough.

Normally Sharon was focused upon the place and activity to which she was headed. She used the term "hidebound" to describe this, perhaps revealing a subconscious awareness that when operating with such a focus her movement was bound within a tight skin. In comparison her memory of the easy, floating walk did not contain any such focus of where

she might have been headed. She did not recall any goal. What was important in her Memory was how she felt - "a feeling of well-being that I hadn't had in a long time". Perhaps when she was not concentrating on her end-goal she found herself freed from the binding she had indicated as her normal state.

Another reason that the women were surprised at how well they did might have been that their regular cues for working hard were missing. As Joan recalled one recent time of moving well she said:

> At the time I felt that I wasn't putting
> out enough. Normally I'm huffing and
> puffing, the last one around the track.
> But this felt like a pleasant workout.
> Later, after talking with the others
> regarding their perception of the workout
> I realized that if I hadn't found it that
> hard I must have been moving well, although
> I didn't feel it at the time. I was passing
> people. I was pleased, but I didn't think I
> was working hard enough.

It felt easy. Joan wasn't "panting ... tight in the chest", as she had been at other times. Even though she had the external feedback of passing others it didn't match up with her internal feedback of breathing easily and smoothly. So she didn't realize that she was moving effectively. She had handled the increased workload so well that she did not even realize that that was what she had done.

A Vitality

Though things flowed evenly and smoothly, there was also a touch of bounce in the times of well-being, even a sense of exhilaration. This emerged in many ways.

Happy In The Self

The co-researchers recalled, in their descriptions, a delight in and about themselves, reminiscent of Jean's memories recorded in Study One. The co-researchers in this study likewise had an experience of pure pleasure in their times of feeling good. Sharon brought this out in her description of a time of feeling healthy:

> I remember walking up the street and
> just feeling physically on top of the
> world. Not an ache or a pain or a

problem. I just felt great. It was
a good feeling. Happiness was a part
of it. A really good happy feeling.
And the world was great. Bigger.
Bigger and positive. A very positive
feeling. A hop, skip, and a jump.
I felt bubbly. Really, really joyful.

As she recalled this experience and attempted to put it into words Sharon's face and whole demeaner became brighter, more alive. Her physical expressions went beyond the limitations of verbal language to convey some sense of the bubbling, skipping joy which she was recalling. Joan's sense of healthiness had involved an aliveness which she also found difficult to put into adequate terms, and so she used the analogy of music, and then extended it into an image of herself walking which was similar to that which was quoted above by Sharon:

(Music would be) like the Nylons.
Not Bach, not Beethoven - that's too
intricate, too heavy. More like
Dixieland. Not really intense, but
moving. If I were walking right now
it would be not quite skipping but a
definite lilt in the step. Quite
brisk, and a lot of swinging in the arms.
Lots of height in the knees. And I would
be smiling. It would be a walk that would
stand out. It wouldn't be a clone walk.

"Smiling", "lilt", "moving", - all terms which bring to mind a picture of happiness in herself. In this happiness Joan experienced herself as unique, not a clone. Perhaps she was uniquely herself in that moment. This was a feeling which Joan described at another point as "being easy in my body". At that same time of healthiness Joan also felt "bubbly" and "very positive", echoing Sharon's description. There was not just a delight in herself, but also a delight about herself.

When we were up there it was just a very
light, happy, bubbly conversation we
were carrying on. Very positive. We
were really high on ourselves and how
well we had done in practice.

Those present in that moment were pleased with what they had done, and how well they had done it. There was a sense of accomplishment. This sense of accomplishment was

also part of Connie's delight in herself in a time of feeling physically attractive. She had been travelling for two years and in that period had become relatively unfit. Since she had be back in the country she had begun to exercise more, and:

> I suddenly felt so good. I also
> talked about how good I felt. I
> was enthusiastic because it felt so
> wonderful and I felt so good.

Within her sense of accomplishment was a comparison with how she had felt before which was similar to Sharon's description at the first of this section. In Sharon's comments there was the statement of "not an ache or a pain or a problem". In saying this she indicated that aches and pains had been present before, and now were noticeable by their absence. Joan also has this type of comparison in one of her descriptions of a time of moving well.

> I didn't feel any pain whatsoever.
> I had a sensation of just elation.
> So happy that I could move well again.

Part of the reason that the experience felt so good was that it felt so different from what had been occurring before. Even if what had been before wasn't so bad, what was now was so good that in comparison there was a huge gap between. And when at the side of the gap which they were describing - the side of well-being - there was this delight and vitality in being alive.

Positively Charged

There was a certain awareness by the co-researchers of themselves which came out in the above descriptions, an awareness of their emotions of elation and happiness. The women also talked about an awareness that was more of a physical nature, one they described as a positive tension or energy. In describing her sense of being healthful when she was in the mountains Joan found words inadequate and therefore attempted an analogy to convey what she meant.

> You asked what does this energy feels
> like, and all I can think of which I
> don't think gives a very good analogy
> is that it is like a little bomb inside
> you that explodes and doesn't go anywhere.
> It just stays inside you. So the bomb

> explodes and the energy is there, and it's just this source that you can't place and you can climb a mountain or go canoeing or whatever.

The analogy of a bomb became clearer at the introduction by the co-researchers of the term 'radiate' as part of their descriptions of feeling good about themselves. The action of a bomb is the release of concentrated energy so that it is free to radiate out from the center. And this was the picture evoked in the co-researchers' descriptions. When talking about feeling physically attractive Ingrid thought that others might know how good she felt about herself because of "the way I look in my eyes. I radiate when I feel good about myself". Connie also described being attractive as:

> ...something that comes from inside you. It has nothing to do with whether you're dressed up or have your hair cut or wearing make-up. Because it's how you feel and so when you feel like you move well then you're going to feel like you look well. Because it comes from inside you. It radiates out.

The co-researchers did not/could not determine what was this source of goodness or energy. But they were very clear that it began inside themselves, moving from there to their edges and beyond for others to see and respond to. Joan gave a detailed description of this movement from the core outwards.

> Feelings radiating from inside. And it starts right in my chest. My stomach gets tight. Not in knots and not worry tight; just comfortably tight. And it radiates from there outward and I feel myself smiling. And I feel my laugh lines all around my eyes crinkle up.

There was an awareness of a movement from within. And when that energy reached the edges of the person's physical shell certain things were experienced. There were changes in the facial features, described above by Joan in her smiling. A number of the co-researchers also mentioned a tingling sensation.

> It's joyous. I can almost feel it in my neck, in the side of my neck here. A kind of pleasurable tingling. It can even be a

> pleasurable tingling through my body, even to my toes.
>
> Happy hands. They feel tingly and it stops about my wrists. I'm holding a pen but I'm holding it very lightly. But I can feel the tingle against the surface of the pen. The points where my fingers and hands are touching the pen feel very alive. They feel very energetic.

It was as if the bomb of energy which had 'exploded' within had created these aftershocks which were experienced in the vibrancy of tingling. At these points in the co-researcher's descriptions there was a clarity of awareness of their physical selves which could be pinpointed to precise areas of their bodies. And, to reinforce the analogy of the bomb, these areas were on the surface of the skin, at the extremity of the energy's expansion. This was not to say that the energy did not continue its movement beyond these bounds. As already quoted, Ingrid had felt that others could tell some of what she felt by the life within her eyes. Joan also referred to this projection of her energy, describing it not as "fire in my eyes, because that doesn't give you a very good idea, but challenged. Lots of energy". It sounded as if the energy was overflowing, moving out and touching others. This would agree with the exchange of goodness which was part of Joan's description of a time of feeling attractive ('Being Able').

More Alive

The vitality which the co-researchers experienced was also expressed in an awareness of themselves as being totally alive. As Sharon stated: "I feel that I'm alive, vivacious, alive to the situation". She was especially aware of this in comparison with how she had previously been burdened because of her illness.

> A strange sense of darkness. And a strange sense of finality. I put notes around in things because if the children had to clean up then they would know what this was.

In that time of darkness Sharon found herself preparing to leave life. In the time of feeling healthy she was very aware of herself as "alive, vivacious". The contrast deepened and expanded the goodness of the feeling healthy.

In her description of a time of moving well Ingrid provided details as to what that aliveness could feel like. Although the level of the activity - running rather that walking - intensified the actual physical happenings, the sensory cues were similar.

> I feel the power in my legs. I feel the
> blood flowing through my muscles. I feel
> the push-off from my feet; my feet on the
> floor. I feel my knees going higher up.
> I feel I can make higher steps. I feel the
> air in my lungs. And it's all working.
>
> (So you are really aware of your body when
> you are doing this?)
>
> Yes. It's a kind of a tingling feeling.
> And it's really pleasurable.

Ingrid was very aware of her physical self in the time she was describing. This appeared to conflict with the lack of awareness of self in times of feeling good which was described in the first study. Yet in all of the discussion connected to this theme of 'Being Alive' there was an apparent coming into and moving out of a self-awareness which was perceived by the co-researchers as positive. They were aware of themselves as happy, exploding with energy, and very alive. This awareness of themselves spilled over into a perception of how they presented themselves to the world, a presentation which differed from their norm.

> It's just that feeling of - well,
> you feel more alive. You just walk
> - confidently isn't the right word.
> Maybe more assured. But I feel
> different inside so I feel like I
> am walking different. Taller and
> more assured.

Playful

In the times of being healthy and attractive, and of moving well, the co-researchers also talked about having fun, playing. It was this element of play which, for Connie, set her skiing apart from simply doing an activity in order to be fit. And it was while skiing that Connie had felt herself being healthy and moving well.

> I don't play in water. I go to the
> pool to swim lengths and then I get

> out. I never go to a pool for fun.
> Whereas I go skiing for fun. I really
> enjoy it. I don't ski to get fit. If
> someone said go do something you enjoy
> today I'd go skiing. The swimming
> pool isn't a play place because I look
> at swimming as a path to be fit.

When Connie went swimming it was in order to reach a certain goal - to "be fit". And focusing on that goal had the same impact on her as Sharon brought out in her description of being "hidebound" . Doing something in order to reach a future result was not part of the condition of well-being which the co-researchers described. Although it could be said that Connie had a goal of having fun when she went skiing it was a goal imbedded in the 'now' of the doing. It was not something which she saw as ahead of her in time. And that 'nowness' was within the description of times of moving well, and was part of the sense of well-being which was being described.

Focusing on what was happening in the present facilitated another aspect of feeling good, that of total involvement. Sharon highlighted this in recalling feeling physically attractive.

> I am noticed because of entering into
> it. Facial expression, the aliveness.
> Entering into the dance and the acting
> out of the fun. The intensity is part
> of what I do. I am a person who is
> really enjoying what she is doing.
> Happy and having fun. Entering into it.

Enjoying what she was doing and entering into it were aspects of the same entity. One aspect did not 'cause' the other. The experience was a whole piece. As Connie said: "When I am doing things I really enjoy I probably feel physically attractive too, because it's a feeling that I'm into whatever I'm doing". When she was not fully involved in what she was doing the enjoyment for Connie was lacking, as she brought out when again comparing swimming with skiing.

> I find swimming really boring. I have
> to set an actual number of lengths
> before I get into the pool or I won't
> swim that far because I get bored.

Connie had to have future goals in order to keep her doing this boring activity. But

maybe focusing on the goals prevented the activity from being enjoyed, as discussed earlier. The interference of having to constantly stop and turn around at the end of each length prevented her from getting into the rhythm which was so much a part of her enjoyment of skiing. The need to work at her breathing in swimming also moved the activity out of the mode of effortlessness which was part of well-being. It was part of a vicious circle - not enjoying leading to setting of goals which in turn prevented the 'nowness' of play which contributed to the not enjoying, and so on.

The importance of the sense of enjoyment in the times of feeling good was summarized by Joan's comments as she described times of moving well.

> Moving well always seems very
> enjoyable. I perceive myself moving
> better when I'm enjoying it.
> Enjoying the company, enjoying
> something about it. This is
> something very central to whatever
> I am doing. It seems less like work
> and more like play.

A Release

One of the reasons that the times selected by the co-researchers were perceived by them as positive was that in these experiences the women were released from or had escaped from that which was not good or helpful.

Getting Away From...

Perhaps the women identified this release with play (see above) because there was an element of 'playing hookey' from the everyday situations. This was certainly so in Sharon's description of feeling healthy. Just prior to the time she was recalling she and her husband had changed their roles within the church. In so doing they found themselves then able to relate to others in a manner which was freeing.

> That sense of freedom of letting go.
> Of letting go of the emotional 'burden'.
> It no longer bound me within certain
> emotional limits. And responses.

As brought out in the theme 'Being Congruent', it was important for Sharon to match with the situation and meet its demands. When she did so she could feel good about

herself. What she appeared to be saying in this quotation was that, with the change in roles the emotional demands also changed. This allowed her to be congruent with the new situation in a way which was experienced by her as freeing. Yet it did not appear to be the congruency which was pleasing to Sharon in this moment she was recalling. It was the being able to be incongruent with the past role which made the experience so positive for her. She felt a freedom to choose not to be a certain way, and that gave her a great sense of release. She had been released from the need to be congruent to the draining demands of the previous role.

There was a contrast between the 'before' and the 'now' which was experienced as a freeing. And this was as true in the physical state as in the above-discussed emotional realm. In recalling a time of feeling healthy Sharon also remembered how she had felt not long before - as if she wasn't going to be able to make it.

> And then to walk feeling absolutely
> free. That's where that morning walk
> was such a marvellous experience. It
> was a sense of being freed from all
> that. That kind of whatever it was,
> it was gone.

There was a sense that whatever had been pulling her down had left, "was gone". In the earlier discussion there was an indication that the "emotional 'burden'" was still present but she had chosen to let it go. To some extent she had put it down and walked away from it. This concept of walking away from 'burdens' was part of other co-researchers' descriptions of times of well-being. That was one of the differences with Connie between the swimming and the skiing. When she was swimming she thought about her concerns and problems and tried to let them work themselves out in her mind. When she was skiing she thought about nothing. As Joan recalled, it was a:

> getting away from whatever concerns I
> have outside of the movement itself.
> To enjoy the environment I am in as well
> as the movement and not be thinking
> about the four assignments I have.

Again there was a letting go of the demands which were normally determining what would be done. For the moment and time in which the movement was occurring nothing else was of concern. In bring the focus to the 'now' everything else became extraneous and

was no longer in the picture.

Although the co-researchers had not made direct reference to how they felt in the everyday there was an underlying message. There was a sense of being bound or constrained by outside forces. Those forces might be the demands of being in a social or scholastic role. They might also include the pressures of illness or the need to be fit. They were often pressures that the individual assumed on her own.

> I was running with my husband who used to do a lot of running. I always felt under pressure that I had to keep up with him. I had to push myself to run with him. After about the first half of the loop I said: "Go on ahead. I can't keep this pace". He said: "That's fine. We'll just go at whatever pace you decide."

Joan had laid upon herself the need to keep up with someone else at a pace which she experienced as uncomfortable. As Connie had brought out ('Being Able'), being able to choose one's pace was important to a sense of well-being. Given permission to do that by her husband, Joan found herself freed to perform well, as she discovered that they "ended up running faster than the pace (they had) started out at".

Whatever they were, and whether or not they were self-imposed, there was the perception by the co-researchers that normally there were pressures restricting to the individual. When these pressures which were binding were gone, or had been let go of, there was a sense of freedom. There was also the awareness of expansion, as Sharon had referred to in the whole world being bigger.

Release of Tension

Times of feeling good about one's self had within them another change from the everyday, and that was relative to being released from a negative tension associated with daily living. The co-researchers perceived this tension quite differently from the bomb-like energy described earlier. This was a tension which negatively impacted upon one's sense of feeling attractive, healthy and how one moved. For Connie this tension appeared to build up over a certain time period, and if she could not participate in the activity in which she knew herself to move well - skiing - she could feel her frustration build up. She felt that she

needed to get out and ski "because it feels so good afterwards". In the process of skiing some of that which had led to the frustration was released, and the internal pressure was thereby reduced.

That reduction of pressure, that release of the negative tension was deep within Joan's memory of a time of feeling healthy. She was in the mountains and:

> All of the sudden I wake up and realize
> that I am there. It's like all the
> tension runs out of my fingers and out
> of my feet and it's breathing in and it's
> wonderful energy which is this fresh air.
> I take that breath and when I exhale that
> breath it's like someone ran their hand
> down from the neck, down each shoulder and
> out to each finger tip and down the back
> of my body, so that it made room for the
> energy. It got rid of the tension that
> was blocking it.
>
> It is like water running. No, more
> like molasses. Slower than molasses. It
> takes time to leave. It's like a weight
> that leaves. It's like carrying a yoke
> on my shoulders and the yoke slowly gets
> disintegrated. The tension wants to work
> through my body. It doesn't just
> immediately - zap, it's gone.

There was not the same sense of being freed which was described earlier in the discussion of being unbound. The gradual dropping away of the tension allowed for the energy to travel throughout Joan. This aspect of the experience was similar. But it was a slower process than the exploding bomb of the 'being vital' description. And rather than a radiating from the center of this energy there was a sense of being filled, replacing the tension that was there before. In this time of well-being there was an element of calmness which appeared to contradict the bouncy vitality mentioned earlier.

Emptying

Joan's description of the tension gradually leaving indicated a type of emptying. It was as if she had been full of the negative tension, and now it had been drained away, leaving room for the positive energy. In describing a time of moving well Connie talked about the quiet feeling which appeared to be part of the same sensation.

There's nothing else going on. It's
a sort of an emptying. It would
probably be more like an emptying out.
Sort of like you can do when you do
some relaxation. There's nothing
really there, just sort of open.
The feeling of how good it is. That's
all. Not anything else.

The releasing of tension and the emptying appeared to be passive, occurring to the women because of the movement and/or the environment. As Connie explained:

(After skiing it is) the same way it
feels after you do really good
relaxation. But then you have worked
at it, whereas when you ski you don't
have to work at it. I don't. To me
it just happens.

The same "just happens" was heard in Joan's description, as it was enough simply to be in the mountain setting. She didn't have to do anything to have the tension leave. Indeed, she described it as an external 'force' - a hand - taking the tension down and out her body. In some ways this relates to the previous discussion on how easy things appeared in the times of well-being. In those descriptions there was likewise a sense of it happening without the input/effort of the participant. In fact, it was as if the co-researcher was almost a spectator, watching someone else. That someone else happened to be herself. There was not a distance implied between a participant and a spectator. But there was the objectiveness of detachment.

This detachment contributed to the calmness which was integral to both moving well and feeling healthy.

Breathing easy with respect to
whatever kind of work I am doing.
Even if it is a hard piece I am
relaxed in my breathing. When I
am most relaxed or calm or controlled
then I would say that I move better.
It's a real contentedness. Like it's
not a euphoria that's really excitable.
It's a peaceful kind of contentedness
that you get, rather than being excited
because it's so wonderful. It's a
peaceful kind of excitement.

There seemed to be a conflict between what the women were describing here and what they had said in the material brought out under 'A Vitality'. There was a sense of euphoria in those descriptions of being vital. There was an elation. Yet there was still a sense of control and order in what was happening. And that sense of order provided a structure which was also peaceful. For Sharon there was :

> Peace. But (for her) that word
> 'peace' doesn't quite describe
> that morning. It was beautiful.
> Probably peaceful too. But that
> isn't the way I felt. Anything
> but. I felt bubbly. Really,
> really joyful.

It is the last word in the above description which perhaps unifies the apparently conflicting aspects of calm and "bubbly". For in joy there is the energy and delight of being vital, but there is also the depth which allows the sense of calm and peace.

An Awareness

Unaware Of Self

One of the indicators of the 'being released' as discussed above was an awareness of one's self as calm and peaceful. But in the descriptions provided by the co-researchers there was also a lack of awareness of one's self: indeed, a lack of awareness of anything at all. This was particularly true in describing times of moving well. When the movement could be done without stress Connie noted that:

> I don't have to think about my
> movements. I just glide along. I
> get into a totally different mind
> space. I'm just there. Everything
> just moves in a sort of synchronized
> fashion so I just go. Once I get
> going in this easy motion everything -
> my arms and legs and my breathing all
> come together and I just go. I just
> stare off to the end of the trail. I

> can get into a sort of trance. I am just feeling the motion as I move. I'm not thinking about how I'm skiing. When I'm on the flat I don't think about any movement at all. It just happens.

"It just happens". In this moment of moving well Connie was not aware of or thinking about what she was doing. 'It' happened all by itself, without her focusing on keeping things operating correctly. When she would come to a hill or hit a patch of bad snow Connie would have to bring her attention back and think about how she needed to place her feet and move her arms in order to keep going. But on the flat that wasn't necessary, and so she could be "in sort of a trance". She also described this as being somewhere else, but the where of that place was not within the conscious realm.

A steady, smooth rhythm facilitated this "sort of trance".

> Once I get going I move into a repetitive rhythm that becomes hypnotic.

In order to have a rhythm an action or sound must be repeated in a steady manner. If only one movement or only one sound is made then there is no rhythm. And in order for there to be rhythm there generally is a combination of single actions or beats, and this combination repeated is what gives the sense of a rhythm. Ingrid gave a good description of this when she talked about the action of rowing well.

> Release your hands - that's a relaxing moment. But almost at the same time you have to push on your legs, so you feel the power in your legs. And then your grip tightens again and you pull with your arms as well.
>
> (When it feels good, how important is the repetition of that feeling good?)
>
> It certainly is not just one single stroke that feels good.

The flowing from the power in the legs to that in the arms, and the subsequent action of the boat itself - all these contributed to the combination that, when repeated,

supplied a rhythm that felt good. When that repetition continued on over an extended period of time the trance-like mind state referred to by Connie was invoked. This was true for Ingrid when the rowing race that she was in was over a hundred kilometre course.

> I am almost functioning on a
> subconscious level. I turn into
> a machine when I row for that long.
> And I am just making the same
> movement over and over again.

This hundred kilometre race was not one of the times of rowing which was for Ingrid a sense of moving well. She was in a "subconscious level" because her mind was wandering or she thinking of something else so that she did not feel the blisters or the painfilled muscles. As Connie had described earlier relative to her swimming, to some extent she was filling in time.

But this was not the mind state to which Connie was referring. Connie's perception was that the trance-like state she was in was pleasurable and one way in which she cued herself that she was moving well. She was not attempting to escape boredom or pain, as Ingrid was doing. For Connie, as explained in her contrasting of skiing and swimming, boredom was handled by thinking about something else, not in not thinking at all. In the time of moving well which Connie was describing she was not filling in time. She was not in our normal time.

Aware Of Surroundings

Although the co-researchers were not necessarily concentrating on themselves in times of feeling good, they often would be aware of what was around. They described themselves as more open to what was about them than when they were in their everyday state. The aliveness which was discussed earlier was facilitated by:

> Just the feeling of my body being up
> there experiencing the climate.
> Feeling the wind, feeling the sun.
> Breathing the fresh air. What the
> weather felt like on my skin.

The co-researcher was taking in all that her surroundings had to offer through all of her senses. There were no artificial barriers of glass or shelter between her and the outdoors. She was fully exposed, but did not feel threatened by it. Rather she experienced

an exhilaration in fully feeling "the climate".

This awareness did not only occur in what was experienced of the environment, but also in how that environment was perceived.

> I'm referring to the experience of the out-of-doors. Of everything around me as being vivid. A vividness to everything. I suppose you could almost put it like a spiritual experience. The grass is greener, the sky is bluer. Everything is vivid.

Yet this vividness was not seen in sharp detail.

> It's more this sense of light. It's like an impressionistic painting rather than a painting that is copying what was there. Feelings and emotions.

Although the co-researchers indicated that they were more aware of their surroundings in their times of feeling good than they normally were, this awareness was not one in which they picked up precise images. As expressed by Connie: "it's an atmosphere, so you can feel it".

Each time the co-researchers talked about interacting with their environment in this type of awareness described above, they were referring to being in the out-of-doors. The importance of nature to a sense of well-being is considered in more detail under the theme of 'Being Connected'.

Feelings

All of the co-researchers stumbled many times in trying to put into words their experiences of feeling attractive or healthy or moving well. Language and its use is based within the analytical aspect of the mental domain. The goodness of the phenomenon being described appeared to be experienced by some other aspect of the self. In discussing the process of trying to describe times of moving well Connie indicated that it had been hard to do this.

> When I say that it's just good, that's good, because it's a feeling. It's not concrete so that you can say all these easy words as to what it is.

Connie was suggesting that what she was trying to describe was almost too abstract to put into words. Or perhaps she was proposing that she did not have the words that might more clearly describe what was happening. Our English language is often lacking the terms to express, not only emotions as in feelings, but also the wholeness of feeling. Sharon brought this out when she was trying to add detail to her description of a time of feeling healthy. She found that it was not concrete details which she was recalling.

> It was more a feeling, a sense. You know how you ordinarily walk up the street and you experience things. But that day I really experienced everything. Almost a physical experience of everything. In the sense of the affirmation of the beauty of the morning and the brightness of the sky and the loveliness of the world around me. And just feeling great inside. And it was all part of the same feeling. But as to details, I couldn't give you that.

As everything was intertwined together in the experience of feeling good it was impossible to separate strands of detail out. When Sharon attempted to create the possible detail that might have been present in this time of feeling healthy the good feeling of the recall was diluted. It was an 'all or nothing'. This importance of feeling in a whole manner is discussed in detail under the theme of 'Being Connected'.

Feelings were important in another way. When talking about attractiveness the co-researchers stated that it really didn't matter what one looked like as far as the external picture. What counted was how one felt inside about herself and what was happening. This was also true when considering how one moved. Even if the technique wasn't correct, if the feeling was good one was moving well ('Being Congruent').

> This is my basic package. I can't really change it. So it has to be the way that I feel about myself. And that comes from inside.
>
> The way I feel is more important than what I see. It has a bigger effect.

Feeling about oneself. Feeling emotions of happiness, enjoyment, contentment.

Feeling the physical experience. The term 'feeling' was basic to all of the descriptions of well-being. Perhaps in times of goodness we are more open to this nebulous and little understood aspect of life. We cannot describe it in our limited verbal language, but the language of the body projects a joy which is infectious. Or it may be more accurate to say that it is the language of the spirit, making connections.

Being Connected

The other day my son said something wonderful.
We were watching T.V. together and he looked at
with this strange little smile on his face.
"I'm touching Cody", he said. I gave him a
puzzled look (his cousin was 650 kilometres
away) and said "What?" "I'm touching Cody",
he said again. "What do you mean?" I asked.
"I'm touching the floor, the floor is touching
the ground, the ground goes all the way to
Thunder Bay and touches their building, their
building goes up and touches Cody ... I'm
touching Cody", he said proudly. I looked at
him with amazement about what I had just been
told.
After a long pause I said slowly: "Yes, I
guess you are. You're touching Cody". He
smiled brighter.
(Morrisseau,1992,p.48)

As mentioned in the theme of 'Being Alive', it was often difficult to put into words what was occurring at the time being described. A major reason for this difficulty was that the phenomenon was experienced as a whole piece, and putting it into words seemed to prompt a dividing up. The experience, for example, of feeling healthy, involved an "overall feeling".

I feel positive. My muscles are strong.
My mind is strong. Just a holistic
sense of being very healthy. Not one
specific thing, but everything all
together.

There was an awareness within the individual that everything was together. And in order for this awareness to be present:

... your whole body has to feel that way.
If you exercise your arm all day it

> wouldn't make any difference. Because it has to be overall. (Everything) is part of the whole feeling. Like being trim, being all pulled together.

Not only must the whole body be present together, but everything else must be working together as well.

> Everything fits together right. It's the whole picture of how your body's working together with your mind and your environment.

There was an interaction of everything the person was with everything which was around her. The specialness of feeling good referred more to the whole occasion than to any particular part of it. As was mentioned under the theme 'Being Congruent', everything had to fit together and be right in order for the person to feel attractive, healthy or that she was moving well. On the other hand, it may have been that the feeling positive about one's self so coloured one's perspective that it seemed like everything else was also special and good. Or it may be that it was all part of the same thing, and therefore one did not cause the other: they both occurred at the same time.

> It's like a package that's all wrapped up and it's all in there. Nothing separate. It's just all together. You've done it, you've seen it, you've lived it. It's just part of you. You are healthy because of it.

In the sense of being a package there was an awareness of being connected to various aspects; others, nature, and one's self.

Connected With Others

The co-researchers expressed that it was important to have contact with others in their environment.

> Being physically active and doing it outside is for me to be part of the world and gives some meaning to my life. Whereas sitting inside all by myself is a sort of disconnecting.

Even if Ingrid did not actually interact with other people it was important for her to be in a place where other people were around. Just being in their presence and seeing the action around helped her to feel part of life.

The goodness of being around people increased if there was deliberate interaction which reinforced this sense of belonging. An example of this in Sharon's history was a time of performing in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. She noted, about herself, that she was:

> ... a person who is really enjoying what she is doing. Enjoying being part of the singing. Enjoying being part of it all.

Sharon described herself as a person who entered into things, making a point of interacting with those around her. Connecting to others in a positive way contributed to her feeling good about herself.

Did Sharon feel good about herself because she was making contact with those around her? Or, was she making this contact because she felt good? In a time of feeling attractive which Joan recalled she seemed to feel that her feeling good created a charismatic energy which initiated a circle of reinforcement.

> I had an electric smile. Magnetic. I would look up and smile at someone and they would beam back at me. It was really a powerful thing. People responded with a lot of energy to the energy I put out. The goodness of my whole self. That I was looking good, I was communicating with other people, and getting goodness from them. I can think of this one fellow and I communicating at this party. He had seen me from across the room and he purposely made his way over to talk to me. At first he was very hesitant, and then his smile got bigger and bigger. He seemed to respond very positively to my conversation or my smile or my being there.

The man's response reinforced Joan's feeling of her goodness, and her goodness kept prompting an increasingly positive response. There was a creation of a circle of exchange of goodness which appeared beneficial for both of them.

Another aspect of being connected to others emerged in Joan's and Ingrid's

descriptions of moving well, specifically regarding the sport of rowing. The importance of everyone doing the same thing at the same time was recognized. When that sychronization occurred it was experienced as a time of moving well.

> It was one moment, one piece when the whole timing in the boat was identical. Everybody caught at the same time, moved at the same time. It all clicked. The feeling of just being one person or one object moving in the water. It is one crew making a movement that propels the boat forward.

The expression 'it clicked' is one used in rowing when that which is being sought - the absolute synchronization of power and timing - occurs. When this happened even the sense of being interconnected was transcended, and the rowers experienced themselves as one being.

This feeling of oneness was not only experienced relative to other people. Even inanimate objects were part of the sense of everything being one entity.

> (Even) clothes felt all part of it, and not external to myself. They were part of the whole process. The same about the rowing. The shell and the oars were not separate. They were all very much a part of the oneness of the crew, and the boat moving. Everything was so interconnected.

The experience of all the people in the boat moving as one body was absorbed into an even larger entity of the "one object moving in the water". At that moment in time being an individual was less important than being part of the larger whole.

But the joy of being synchronized did not always mean such loss of sense of self. In describing a time of moving well while running with a friend Joan said:

> There was a being able to run at the same pace, same rythmn, same flow as what she had. Feeling very smooth about what we were doing together. It felt very clean between us. The motions were very similar, very easy to put together.

Both Joan and her friend had kept their sense that each of them was a separate

entity. Yet it was the smoothness of moving together, and at the same time, which reinforced the rhythm and made the experience so positive. In this case it was not the being one which mattered, but the being two, yet so together, which was the contributing factor.

Connected With Nature

The strongest sense of connection, of being part of a larger whole, emerged as the co-researchers remembered where they had been when they had felt so positive about themselves. For each of the participants being in an environment ruled by nature rather than by that which was man-made had been an integral part of the phenomenon of well-being. To the co-researchers, of even greater significance than being connected to other people was the aspect of experiencing a connection to nature. This concept had emerged earlier in this report under other themes. For example, under 'Being Congruent' with what was important to them, almost every co-researcher stated that being in the out-of-doors mattered greatly. 'Being Able' to be in the mountains or in other areas of natural settings contributed to feeling good about themselves. And being in those mountains influenced the energy level and tension release which were part of 'Being Alive'.

In describing the aliveness of "experiencing the climate" Ingrid indicated how much she loved being part of nature.

> To me it is most pleasurable to be
> active outside. To feel the weather,
> the climate. I think I feel healthier
> when I am outside. Breathing the air.
> There is a connection with the world.

Virtually all of Connie's higher levels of feeling good involved cross-country skiing. As mentioned in earlier chapters it was the being outside and active which she highly valued. She was not simply referring to the doing of the movement patterns of cross-country skiing in her descriptions. Those patterns can be mimicked by the use of machinery or the wearing of special footwear. What made cross-country skiing special for Connie involved much more than that, and virtually all of this 'much more' involved interacting with the elements. There was the anticipation involved in considering what to wear according to the weather, and what wax to put on the skiis, and what trails to go on. Already in that anticipation Connie had placed herself in the outdoors by recognizing that what is happening there would

strongly influence what would be done, and how it would feel.

Just being in the out-of-doors made the experience more positive. One of the things which happened was a change in the awareness of the self. For example, for Joan being in the mountains made her "soul whole". But this wholeness occurred in a way which appeared contradictory.

> It's my feeling of feeling small.
> I get out there and it's so
> majestic, so big, so much. I just
> can't take it all in. Feeling that
> I am just a small part of this whole
> big thing. I can go there and do
> things there but I am not really
> a part of it. I can act on it.
> Things act on it - but not that they
> create this. This is created outside
> of ourselves. It is just so big.
> And beautiful.

Joan had a sense of connection with a much larger whole, yet it was almost as if her part in the connection was unimportant. The mountains would continue to be who/what they were regardless of her presence. It was a paradox. On the one hand Joan talked about being an insignificant part, if a part at all, of a majestic environment. On the other hand, this insignificance was a part of her whole phenomenon of feeling healthy.

For each of the co-researchers thinking well of themselves belonged within an awareness of the grandeur of nature. This awareness of grandeur did not negate their sense of themselves, but instead resonated with something internal which was recognized as good. The women were not nullified as persons, but in some sense they were exalted.

Connected With Self

In each of the discussions of connecting with others and connecting with nature there was an indication that the 'self' had become, to some extent, unimportant. When a group of people move in synchronization, or when the surroundings are so majestic, who one was appeared not to matter.

Whole Self

Yet in the times of well-being there was also a special awareness of one's self; a self which was whole. I asked Ingrid if, when moving well, was there any feeling about herself which was part of it.

> I think the whole feeling is myself. Not like myself is a little thing dangling in there. It's more like myself is the core from which it expands and grows. It's not cognitive. The feeling is in my whole body. It's not just occurring in my head, even though it may be registering up there. But it's not a sensation as if it's only there. It includes my whole body. It includes the whole me.

At the end of the section regarding 'Being Alive' there was a brief discussion on the importance of feelings to the co-researchers, and how difficult it was to put those feelings into words. The aspect of wholeness which was within those feelings could not be dissected into parts - a process which is necessary when trying to label what is happening. This difficulty was seen again in Ingrid's rejection of the idea that her 'self' was a part of the moving well. Her self was the moving well, because her whole self was doing it and was impacted upon in the doing. Comments from the other co-researchers regarding their times of well-being indicated that the doing itself was "an expression of myself", of everything the person saw herself being. It was "my whole being that was doing this" interacting which was deemed so positive by the co-researcher. Sharon found it hard to talk about feeling attractive in a particular dress:

> Because I think of myself as a person who has vitality and life and interest in life.

Sharon could not talk about aspects of herself, such as what she was wearing, as separate from all that she was as a person. She was troubled by her perception that her description did not adequately reveal her whole nature. For it was her whole nature which was in the feeling attractive. As she expressed it: "the inner resources relate to how you feel about yourself". And those inner resources were basic to the person she saw herself being.

Sharon was not talking about an inner and outer nature, for then again there would

be the splitting into parts of that which was one being. As expressed by Joan:

> It's not an inside and outside
> thing. It's all together.

In the feeling good about one's self the whole self was experienced. The way in which we have categorized our growth and development into different domains - the physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual - was inadequate to describe the phenomenon. As Connie noted in her description of being healthy:

> It's not just the physical activity.
> It's the ability to be outside,and so
> it's a combination of physical and
> mental health.

Connie had commented later in the same interview that a major difference between how she felt relative to swimming and how she felt respective to skiing was "the whole sort of mind and body connection". She could achieve the physical fitness level she wanted from swimming. But the connections within herself needed the sense of enjoyment and the being outside, as discussed in the previous themes. These connections took the experience to a higher level of well-being, whether it was exhibited in feeling attractive, moving well, or in feeling physically healthy. When recalling times of each of these phenomenon Connie talked about skiing, for it was then that:

> My body feels really good and everything.
> And my mind feels really good. Like
> everything fits together. I just feel
> great.

Sharon brought out how, even when the situation was not so positive, it was impossible to separate out experiencing it into the compartments of the developmental domains.

> I don't think you can separate the
> physical. That some of these emotional
> things in one's life have as much to
> do with the physical well-being as a
> lot of other things. Maybe sometimes
> when I wasn't feeling physically so well
> they were as related to some of the
> emotional things I was handling as
> anything else.

Sharon recognized the possibility that in her past her emotional state could have had

a negative impact upon her physical condition. Not feeling emotionally free because of the expectations of the roles which she was in affected other areas of her being. Being released from those expectations was integral to the main time of feeling physically healthy which she described (see 'Being Alive). So that it was that, in this time of feeling healthy, Sharon described herself as experiencing "a wholeness, a completeness". The "interaction of body and mind and spirit" did occur without hinderance. At that time everything was in place as it should be, and was complete.

Connie and Sharon had talked about an interaction of mind and body and emotions. In recalling how she could not call up any specific details in her description of a peak time of feeling physically healthy Sharon referred to yet another aspect of the self.

> The total experience was very real. The spiritual element. Part of the reality was an inner depth of assurance. A spiritual depth that made the experience what it was.

For Sharon to clarify what she meant by this "spiritual depth" was very difficult, but there was a sense of both an intraconnection and interconnection.

The inaccuracy of considering a person and/or her perception of something such as being healthy in anyway but a whole manner was pointed out by Connie when she was discussing going to a doctor because:

> ... something is bugging me and I don't think it is working right, so I want it checked. And they'll say: 'There is nothing wrong', but that has nothing to do with the way my mind and my body feel together. The doctor only looks at if your kidney is working all right, or your bladder, or your heart. They couldn't even attempt to see the whole picture of what health means to me as a person.

"As a person". To be considered as a person meant to be considered in a whole way. If the mind and the body (or emotions or the spirit or relationships) were coming together in a way which was not comfortable, there was dis-ease. When there was a feeling healthy, there was no coming together, because there was no experience of separation first. There was only the perception of being whole. All together. When asked where the feeling of well-being was Ingrid replied:

I think it is all over my body. But
it must also be inside, like in my heart.

For many people, particularly women, the heart is the core of the self. 'Getting to the heart of the matter' means cutting through all that which is nonessential and coming to that which matters. The sense of well-being experienced by Ingrid was so deep that it penetrated to this place of mattering, and may in fact have emanated from it. In reality what all the co-researchers were saying was that the well-being was not penetrating to or emanating from the heart. It simply was there as it was everywhere of the self.

No Parts

One ingredient in experiencing a whole self was also the experiencing of a whole movement. The knowing of what the whole movement was contributed to the sense of goodness, as explored in the discussions under the theme of 'Being Able'. But it was the flow of doing the movement as one whole piece which fed into the sense of moving well. Whether it was the single action of doing "a pike solto from the mini-tramp." or the repetitive pattern of rowing the goodness was found in:

... feeling it in its completeness.
Knowing the full movement and
experiencing the full movement. It's
complete. It's whole. It feels
like it comes from every part of my
body that's involved. It's just a
great feeling because you can feel
it in it's totality.

It might have been that feeling the movement in "it's totality" was a natural outcome of training in the particular area. For example, in the quotation above Ingrid was referring to a skill in artistic gymnastics, a sport of which she was well-acquainted. She was explicit in describing her performance of that skill.

I knew exactly in the movement where
I was, the timing. A pike solto from
a minitramp. I jump on the tramp. I
get this height. I just go up. At the
highest point I make myself small, make
this angle and turn around. At the last
moment I stretch out again. I enjoyed
the moment of making this movement. Of
feeling it in its completeness.

Although she described the steps in doing the skill, Ingrid felt it "in its completeness". She experienced the skill whole. Perhaps it was her training which allowed this to occur. Ingrid knew from past work what the movement pattern involved, and she could feel it and see it in her mind's eye as a whole movement. She did not have to be concerned with what her left shoulder might be doing, or how to turn her head at a certain point. In being proficient in her movement her skill level was such that everything flowed into one another, creating a movement pattern rather than separate, distinct actions. Because Ingrid knew what the complete movement looked and felt like she could place herself into its pattern.

This doing the movement whole was related to some extent to the type of awareness which was occurring at the time. As discussed under the theme 'Being Alive', not thinking about what needed to be done was part of feeling good. This feeling was lost if the movement had to be divided up into its parts so that they could be concentrated on and performed correctly.

> I don't have to think about 'put
> my arm here and bend my knee this
> far'. I feel like I'm just gliding
> along and all in one. Because I
> don't have to think of each part of
> it. All as one. It's not all
> disjointed. I just have to glide.

One aspect which had emerged in all the descriptions by the co-researchers was the awareness of, not only the movement as a whole thing, but also the body as a totality. In times of feeling good the body was perceived without the detail of parts. All of the body was working as a unit. The movement of each limb contributed to the reaching of the goal: all the parts of the body which were involved in the action were doing what they should. This contributed to the smoothness and flow which was basic to the movement whole. An example of this totality was Joan's description of a time of running well.

> I felt my body parts not fighting
> themselves. My arms and my legs
> were both propelling me forward
> instead of one going backward. I
> was also feeling very much as if
> I didn't have parts to my body. It
> was all one material that works
> together. It was my body, my one
> body. It was just one movement all
> together instead of several small

movements that I was making.

Another reason for the lack of detail in the descriptions by the co-researchers may be the type of awareness involved at a time of well-being. As Sharon had expressed, the memory seemed to involve more of an "impressionistic painting" (see 'Being Alive').

In seeking deeper understanding of what she was describing regarding a time of feeling physically attractive Joan tried to bring out more details. She attempted to remember what else she might have been wearing, how her hair looked, and how different parts of her body looked. As she did so she started to come down from the high of recalling the experience. She noted:

> When I try to think of anything specific
> I always loose it.

Perhaps the time under consideration was so wrapped up in the sense of the wholeness that it was contradictory to search for details. This interpretation also applied to times when the co-researchers spontaneously mentioned occasions when they had not felt so good about themselves.

> There are times I see all the grey hairs. I think I look more at parts than I do at the whole picture. All the features that are not good-looking according to the standards that are presented to us in the magazines. My nose is too big, I've got too many wrinkles, my hair is too grey.

> I feel physically unattractive. I feel that each part of my clothes doesn't look together. My body doesn't look together. I have these fat hands and fat stomach and I think of myself in parts instead of all together.

In times of not feeling good about themselves the co-researchers could focus on parts of their bodies and still maintain the sense of wrongness, whereas when they focused on the same parts in feeling good the sense of well-being became diluted. The wholeness of the body awareness was too integral to the phenomenon to be denied. When focusing on different parts of their bodies the co-researchers saw details which they found displeasing.

Perhaps it was this self-focus which prevented them from feeling good about themselves, although it was not clear why they would choose to concentrate on those parts which they knew from previous experience were not acceptable.

In describing times of feeling physically attractive the co-researchers found themselves not talking about the appearance aspect, but rather referred again and again to the feeling of the experience. And in that time of that feeling the women were not aware of details, of parts of their bodies. When Joan tried to find detail in her recalling of a specific time she said:

> I think of myself in the red dress
> and I don't see very much in detail.
> I see the dress because I know
> exactly what the dress looks like from
> years of wearing it. And then I go to
> look at my feet, and I can't really
> see my legs. It's very obtuse. I can
> see the whole thing but I can't see parts.

Joan could not bring up from her memory details of her own appearance, although she did remember some detail of what was happening. But the main thing she recalled was how she felt. What was meant by 'feeling' could not be adequately described by any of the co-researchers.

> ... it just all was coming together,
> so that my body felt good. Everything
> fits together right. The whole thing
> about my mind, my body and what I
> am doing.

Interaction Of Health, Attractiveness, And Movement

In the explorations of the descriptions offered by the four co-researchers the same threads crossed and recrossed time and again, so that I found it hard to tell where one theme ended and another began. In actuality there was no beginning or end, but simply the highlighting of one theme as found within another. Not only did the same themes keep emerging, but they were interwoven into one basic piece.

The co-researchers found it difficult to limit themselves to describing one of the phenomenon without bringing in the other two. Although they had not been asked to keep

the three questions separate they had, on their own, thought that that was a requirement of the research. In trying to recall times of feeling attractive Joan found that she was drawing on what she had said in the previous two interviews.

> That's why I had problems thinking about this one. I was trying to divorce it from the other ones. And I kept coming back to when I was sitting on the floor in the living room (healthy): I felt physically attractive. When I was rowing and I finished that time (moving well) I felt physically attractive.

For Sharon the coming together as coordinated referred to both how she looked and how she moved, and the lack of it affected her so that she saw herself as unhealthy. Just as the body and its movement could not be seen as made up in parts in times of well-being, neither could aspects of that well-being be separated out. Just as good relationships to others and nature were integral to the feeling good, so did one's movement and health and attractiveness all have to be together in a right relationship.

> For me they are all quite connected because I would never ever feel physically attractive if I didn't have (health and well-movement). Because it's related to the things I do to be more fit. And when I'm doing those it's related to when I'm moving well. They're too connected.

Levels

> ...there is perhaps even a certain parallelism between the degrees of aliveness and the extent of adaptability of every animal - in every man (Seyle,1974,p.47).

Many of the apparent contradictions discovered in the study were partially resolved when differences in intensity were considered. For example, whether or not one was aware of her physical self in times of well-being may not only have involved the type of awareness

which was occurring, but also the depth of the well-being which was being experienced. The questions of the study did not suppose that it was a peak experience of these phenomena which was being investigated. In their descriptions of feeling attractive, healthy and moving well the co-researchers were not always talking about the "ultimate level" of the phenomena, although that was included in what they recalled. They used terms which indicated that they saw themselves moving up and down along a vertical continuum past the taken-for-granted of the body of everyday life towards this "ultimate level". The top level furthest from the basement of illness of the continuum of health was not simply lack of illness, but a type of well-being. The level furthest from awkwardness of the continuum of movement was not lack of stumbling, but a wellness of moving. The highest level from ugliness of the continuum of attractiveness was not even good looks, but a wellness in the self. As our understanding of the light continuum has changed, the 'ends' of that continuum have been extended further and further along a line. As our understanding of the experiencing of our bodies enlarges, likewise the continuums involved will extend further and further.

Levels

In the descriptions by the co-researchers of the three phenomena there was a sense that one type of experiencing was at a different place than another. Ingrid discussed this concept of different levels in talking about her development of a sense of being attractive.

> I think through the years I've built
> a certain feeling of attractiveness,
> at a certain level, and it is certainly
> higher than it used to be when I was a
> teenager.

Ingrid also indicated that this higher level of seeing herself as attractive went only so far along the continuum, and not even as far as others' perceptions of her.

> I have accepted this image of myself,
> the way I look, as O.K. So I think I
> have this level of feeling good about
> myself, for myself. But I'm still
> surprised if there is a man who thinks
> I am attractive - really attractive.
> There is a part of me that doesn't
> believe it.

Because of something within herself Ingrid was unable to accept the viewpoint of

others and let it help her rise along the continuum. This lack of impact of the opinion of others reflected what had emerged in the second study, as well as with other co-researchers in this study. The women could only incorporate the positive comments of others if those comments agreed to some extent with how they already felt about themselves. Although feedback from those around was part of the formation of a self-concept there was some internal resistance if the feedback did not resonate. Fortunately the opposite also appeared to be true. If the women felt good in themselves then the impact of negative comments upon their self-esteem was buffered.

A sense of levels was also involved in the phenomenon of moving well. As Ingrid expressed it, there was a feeling that: "this is close to what it is supposed to be like but it's not really there yet". In this case she was talking about the knowing how the movement was to be and the doing of the movement not quite matching. And therefore the movement wasn't "really there yet". If certain elements of well-being were not fully present then the peak experience of moving well was not experienced. For each of the co-researchers there were one or two elements which were key for them in their sense of well-being in each of the phenomena. In the above description it was important to Ingrid that the knowing and the doing of the movement were congruent with each other.

Another element which needed to be present for Ingrid to experience moving well in itself included different levels, and that was her sense of feedback from her muscles. She had expressed how being tired led to a different relationship with her muscles than:

> ... when I feel up and activated.
> In tune with or connected with the
> very short, clear picture of a
> movement. I mean a picture in the
> kinesthetic sense, more than a
> visual sense. Sometimes there is
> hardly any connection. And to me
> that does not feel as good. To me
> the strong feeling is more
> pleasurable than when I hardly have
> any feedback.

Having strong feedback from her muscles meant to Ingrid that she could tell where in the movement pattern she was and how she was doing it. When there was strong feedback the necessary element of control was also present, and she experienced a feeling of moving well.

For Connie not having to think about her movements was integral to her experience of moving well.

> If I start thinking it concretely
> then I'm moving to a lower level
> where I am thinking about what I
> am doing. If I trip or
> something then it's back to a
> different level. And I have to
> slowly work up to the first where
> I'm not thinking about how I'm
> skiing or going.

Only skiing provided the opportunity for reaching a high level of moving well for Connie, as "every other thing (she did) requires more conscious work". Within her description of a lack of thinking there was also the aspect of "a totally different mind space" where everything was one. With the need to think about how the movement was done, because of the terrain or other conditions, the movement was "not at the same level of mind and space connected to it". The easy flow of movement which Connie associated with this 'mind space' was the core of moving well for her. She was not simply talking about a good feeling because of the release of endorphins relative to her high degree of aerobic activity. Working hard in swimming in all probability released just as many endorphins, but it was not perceived in the same way. Connie found that she had to concentrate upon her breathing and work harder in swimming than in skiing. This limited the experiencing of the "fluid, easy motion" and therefore also limited getting into the same "mind space" as when skiing. Without this she was at a different level which she identified as being lower on the vertical continuum.

The strength in her feedback mechanism described earlier was also part of Ingrid's feeling healthy.

> There's degrees of feeling physically
> healthy. When I just think physically
> to me it is the feedback of my body;
> how much to you get.

For Sharon her vivid experience of being filled with light and moving with freedom and vitality was basic to her peak level of feeling healthy. But most of the time her evaluation of her health was based upon her ability to cope with the situation. When they

were in India for over twenty years the whole family was medically ill a large part of the time.

> The kinds of things like malaria and dysenteries and fever; the kinds of things that go with being in India. All that time I never thought of myself as being unwell. I suppose most of the time it was a continual battle. It's part of being in India that you battle with these things. Continually - not only yourself but with the family. So we just coped. It's the norm. A given. It goes with the territory.

Because they managed to make it from day to day and do the work that they were called to do, Sharon "never thought of (her)self as unwell". She was coping, along with everyone else who was there, and therefore she was not sick. Not unwell was at a relatively low level of the health continuum. The lowest level, also acknowledged by the other co-researchers, was that time when one could not cope. When illness or injuries forced a person to not do anything, or at least not do that which was most important, then the individual saw herself as sick, or unwell, or not healthy at all.

A higher level than that of the simply coping which was mentioned above was described by Sharon as:

> I'm not going to the doctor for anything. I'm not taking medicine for anything. When I go out for walks now I feel good and I walk well. But I just am physically aware that the body carries with it some of the results of these things through the years.

This wasn't the highest level of feeling healthy which Sharon had described earlier. Perhaps it could be labelled as the 'O.K.' level of health, above simply coping but below that of being lightfilled, which was part of her description of an ultimate level of feeling healthy.

In all of Joan's descriptions of times of well-being she brought out the idea of energy. In the peak times she was filled with positive energy. When that energy was not so present she still felt relatively good, but not to the same degree.

> A part of the positiveness is left,
> but I feel like I am too tired to
> use it. I don't have the strength,
> I don't have the energy. There is
> some (positiveness) in my chest,
> but it needs a catalyst.

Without the sense of energy which was so vital to her Joan could feel positive, but not necessarily at the top of feeling healthy. That level which she had recalled, and re-experienced in her recalling - that high level was at that moment out of reach.

The element which had the most importance for Connie was that of being active and able to do what she wanted. And this was impacted upon by her level of physical fitness. The more active she was the more fit she became, and the more fit she was the more active she could be. In order for her to move rhythmically as she wanted to do when skiing she had to "be at a certain level of fitness, because otherwise you have to keep stopping or your skiing is jerky". In order for Connie to be where she wanted to be, in the outdoors, she needed to be fit. As mentioned above, simply coping with the daily demands was at a lower level.

> Being able to work doesn't mean I
> feel healthy. I have to be able to
> do things that are outside. (And)
> now I am out of shape. I'm not toned
> up because I haven't been doing enough
> exercise. And so I feel pudgy because
> I'm not toned up, so I don't feel like
> I can move smoothly. And yet I may do
> everything I want to do right now. But
> it is a different level of being able to
> do it. It's not my ultimate level of
> physically healthy that I have felt before.

For Connie "being healthy (was) achieving the things I want my body to be able to do", and to do them in the settings which she preferred. The doing of the activity also needed to be at a level with which Connie could be pleased. When she had injured her shoulder it impinged upon her kayaking so that she could not perform up to her expectations of herself. She did not see herself as unhealthy in this situation, but neither did she see herself as being at the top level of health.

A time of top level of health for Connie involved all of that which mattered to her.

> Everything just flowed together and

> worked right. I never got a cold or anything. But it was more than that. I felt good everyday. I weighed less. My body felt trim, because it was in shape. I didn't have flabby muscles. They were toned up. I felt good about my body because it was letting me do the things I liked, such as skiing every day. It affected my mood too. I felt good about what I had just done which made me feel good about what I was going to do next. I felt trim because I was in shape. I didn't feel pudgy. I was trim and toned up. I am healthy now. But it's not the ultimate level I felt then. It's a lower grade.

As with Sharon, the absence of illness was recognized by Connie as a step along the path towards health, but certainly not the highest level. Although Connie's 'ultimate level' of health seemed to reflect a teeter-tottering in her own thinking of now and then, trim and pudgy, it was not simply the flip side of being sick. For example, for her being healthy was not being flabby. But neither was it only the opposite of flabbiness, or being toned. To some extent Connie was "toned up" at the time of the interview, at least enough so that she could do what was needed in her daily life. But this was not the degree of health which Connie had found in her 'ultimate'.

Involved in the continuum of Connie's state of health was the operation of her physical self, how it worked. At the point being described Connie referred to her awareness of everything working right. All the parts of the body were doing what they were supposed to be doing. The immunity system was operating in such a manner that she didn't get sick with the colds or flu which were going around. The muscles were toned, so that she was able to engage in an activity which she enjoyed - skiing - on a daily basis.

And her emotions were also in good shape. Because she had been doing that which she enjoyed she was prepared to go on and do other things which were necessary. She felt good about the activities in which she was involved. Her standards for things being "right" mentioned in the chapter 'Being Congruent' were being met.

It was a surprise for Connie to discover that she had various levels in her perception of her own health. Prior to the interview she had believed that she thought of herself as

healthy or unhealthy. But in searching her memory for a time of feeling physically healthy she had found that:

> ... it's hard, because obviously for me it is not a black and white of being healthy or not healthy. It has to be a continuum. I am not unhealthy now, but I am not at that optimum health.

Acceptable Levels Of Hindrance

Not only were there various levels of health, attractiveness and moving well, but there were also optimal levels of pain and hindering which could be present in each phenomena without preventing the peak experiencing. For Connie it was all right if there was some hurt, "as long as it (didn't) interfere with what you wanted to do". She could handle a certain level of suffering if she was still able to climb up the mountain without too much work, or ski without loosing the rhythmical flow. With Ingrid the fact that she could keep up the pace which she wanted made the presence of some discomfort unimportant.

If the pain went beyond a certain level then the co-researcher could no longer enjoy that which she was doing, as the awareness of the pain would cut through the concentration on the activity. The focus would shift to the pain itself and how it was impinging on the movement. Such labelling of acceptable and unacceptable levels of discomfort came up in all of the interviews. There were various types of hindrances which were mentioned; blisters and back pain, the length of one's hair, the tightness of the clothing, fatigue, and depression. To a certain degree the presence of these factors could be accepted as long as the pain or the fitness level or the flying hair did not interfere with the obtaining of the objectives. As long as the person could do what she wanted to do the way she wanted to do it a certain amount of trouble could enter without changing the positiveness of the experience. This aspect of non-interference was also discussed under the theme of 'Being Able'.

Another possible reason why the pain could be ignored was that it was not felt until after. In fact, unawareness of something wrong was part of the 'mind space' which Connie sought as an important aspect of moving well.

> Sometimes I get blisters but I don't
> feel them until I stop at the end.
> Because I'm just skiing along in
> another mind space and I don't feel
> it until I'm finished.

The Need For Variety

In order for the activity to be experienced in a pleasurable way there was a need to have within it variations in the levels of difficulty and challenge. Not having this variation when swimming lengths meant to Connie that the activity was boring. There was no real need for her to adapt to her environment in a changing way, because the setting stayed the same throughout her workout. The only challenge she would have would be to avoid the people which might be in her way, and that was seen more as a frustration than a positive challenge.

For Connie to feel that she was moving well it was necessary to have variety so that her ability to adapt was tested, and she could see that she could meet the challenge.

> I need that sort of semi-flat space
> where I can get into some kind of
> rhythm, because that's where everything
> comes together and it feels good.
>
> (But you wouldn't like always flat?)
>
> No. It would be O.K. for a short time,
> and then even though I'm in this good
> rhythm there has to be some variety as
> well. I always ski from the edge of
> the park to the freeway and back
> because it's got lots of hills. And
> I like going down them. And get good

> exercise going up. But it's got a few stretches where you can just get going and go really well.

If the level of difficulty was such that it was constantly pushing Connie to her limit she would not have been perceived the activity as good. There had to be places where she could experience the easy movement which has been discussed before. But if it was only the easy movement that wouldn't be right either. This appeared to contradict Connie's earlier description of peak times of moving well. In those times she was moving in such a way that she didn't have to think, just go. But in this description she welcomed the need to consciously apply herself to climbing the hills, and to controlling her speed as she skied down. Perhaps in the latter situation the element of meeting the challenge was more important to Connie than that of being in a particular mind space. If the two could be combined in the same session then that would be the optimal situation, as she described at the end of the above quoted material.

Being able to handle challenges of different levels varied as one's skill level changed. Connie selected a trail on which to ski which would, to some extent, demand the use of skills which were at a reasonable high level. Other situations recalled in this study, such as competitions and the playing of starring roles, required that the co-researchers be competent at the skills involved. It was the matching of the demands of the situation with the skill level of the co-researcher which was part of the feeling of well-being. Again, there was an optimal level of challenge involved, relative to the skill level of the player.

Contrasts

Having an extreme opposite with which to compare helped the co-researchers to clarify their descriptions of well-being. When there was not that contrast the co-researchers found it more difficult to separate out a particular time of, for example, feeling attractive. This was true for Sharon.

> I can't go back to any recollection when I didn't feel that I looked O.K. or more than O.K. My image of myself has always been that I'm attractive.

Ingrid and Connie had always seen themselves as healthy people. Because this was

perceived as their normal state they had trouble describing exactly what 'it' was. When Connie could recall a time of not being as well as she liked that she began to be more focused in describing feeling healthy.

> For quite a while I had been quite
> unfit, and working a lot of shift
> work so I was always tired, all the
> time. And so I was very aware when
> I started to do something and improved.
> There is such a strong contrast that
> that is when I realize how good I
> feel now. Whereas if I was always
> feeling sort of good I wouldn't
> notice the difference.

The darker the contrasted time the more dramatic the backdrop for the brilliance of the time of well-being. This was very evident relative to Sharon's light-filled experience of feeling healthy.

> For me, inside, a light. Lots of
> light. No heaviness or no sense of
> sadness or anything like that. But
> all light. It was great. And it was
> so vivid. I don't remember just when
> this was. But it was so real that
> I've never forgotten.
>
> Part of that whole experience may
> have been heightened by the fact of
> having gone through some other
> experiences which were very different.
> The sense of blackness (of before).

Sharon had been able to describe with intensity how that sense of blackness of before had been experienced.

> I had all this pressure in my throat
> that I kept telling everyone about.
> It was this pressure all the way down
> through the system. For whatever reason
> there was a feeling of darkness. And a
> strange sense of finality.

Sharon's description of herself as she was at that time was a description of herself as well, "but there were a lot of things that just didn't seem right". How distant was this understanding of being well from the peak experience described above. This difference

became even more apparent when recalling that Sharon had felt freed from this latter level of health in the ultimate experience of light which she had recalled. Not only was there a difference in where along the continuum she saw herself in the light-filled experience, but the difference was so great that she saw it as a release from the past. The 'well' of the light phenomenon was seen as worlds apart from the 'well' of the dark time.

Reflections on 'Being Well - Well-Being'

Csikszentmihalyi (1975,1979,1990) has developed a concept of 'flow' which was relevant in one way or another with all the themes which were explored in this study. He had explored "the positive aspects of human experience" (1990,p.xi), and in the process had come to certain conclusions as to what was involved in the optimal state he described as 'flow'. "Flow - the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (1990,p.4). He equated this state with "the phenomenology of enjoyment" (IBID,p.49) which his studies suggested had eight major components: challenge, concentration, clear goals with immediate feedback, deep but effortless involvement, sense of control, no self-concern but a stronger self, and a change in the experiencing of time.

Although the components were listed as above in his text the model he proposed appeared to have goals as the central aspect. "When we choose a goal and invest ourselves to it to the limits of our concentration, what ever we will do will be enjoyable" (1990,p.42).

The co-researchers, on the other hand, saw themselves choosing the activities they did because they were already perceived as enjoyable. Again, the question of cause-effect does not appear to be relevant. One did not come before the other. It was that awareness of one was before the awareness of the other.

The following reflections will be organized around the components of the "phenomenon of enjoyment" which Csikszentmihalyi has described. But just prior to doing that there is the need to consider the emotions the co-researchers mentioned in their descriptions, and where they belong in this theory.

Emotions

When first considering the concept of 'flow' I found it hard to see where, if anywhere, the emotional aspect of the experience was recognized. Joan had used the term 'enjoyment' in her descriptions, and that appeared to fit. But what about the 'self-squeeze', the 'on-top-of-the-world', the 'joy', the 'calm contentment', the 'having fun',and the just plain 'feeling good'? How did this 'flow' speak to these feelings?

For example, what about the idea of 'having fun' - a difficult phenomenon to describe. This did not appear to be an aspect explored by Csikszentmihayli, even though he indicated that "the experience of playfulness" (1979.p.260) was the object of his studies. Frost and Klein (1979) included fun as opposed to drudgery in their play-work continuum, placing 'fun' on the side identified with play. Yet they also did not go into any detail as to what 'fun' was. Trying to talk about 'fun' appeared to be as difficult as trying to describe other feelings which had emerged in Study Three, such as those listed above. Those feelings could not be recorded by another, and yet they were very real to the co-researchers. And the feelings were an integral part of the well-being being described. It would be dishonest to the phenomenon to try to pass over feelings because of the awkwardness involved in trying to put them into words.

Cohen (1991) attempted to elevate feelings in the scientific world by suggesting that humans have fifty-three senses with which they interact with the world. "Although we don't know how other organisms experience senses, we do know that we sense them as feelings" (Cohen,1991,p.86). According to Cohen it is important to recognize the value of such feelings, as "scientifically observing the world while disregarding senses and feeling was like watching television with the sound turned off and believing you fully understood the programs" (p.86). But acknowledging the importance of a feeling such as 'having fun' did not help describe what it was.

Upon first reading Csikszentmihalyi's work does not appear to speak to this important area. Closer examination of Flow (1990) revealed that feelings had been considered, but under different terminology. Attention, focused or present as a habit, allows information to enter consciousness and be acted upon.

> Because attention determines what will or will not appear in consciousness, and because it is also required to make any other mental events - such as remembering, thinking, feeling, and

> making decision - happen there, it is useful to think of it as psychic energy. ...attention is our most important tool in the task of improving the quality of experience.
> (Csikszentmihalyi,1990,p.33)

Negative feelings or emotions were described as "psychic disorder" (p.36) in that they would interfere or conflict with the goals of the person. They would block the free flow of the 'psychic energy' needed to meet the goal. How personally important were the goals which were being interfered with would determine how intensely the negative emotion would be experienced.

The corollary to this is that positive feelings, such as those included in the descriptions of the co-researchers, must be those which are within psychic order. "When the information that keeps coming into awareness is congruent with goals, psychic energy flows effortlessly" (IBID,p.39). Again, the importance of the goals to the individual determines how intense is the positive feeling. This is congruent with the descriptions of the co-researchers. When they were doing and being that which mattered to them, they felt good, joyful, tingly and happy. From this theory the times of intense joy, such as Sharon's light-filled experience of health, belong to goals which are very important to the person. Having been face-to-face with death the 'goal' of being alive probably mattered a lot to Sharon. Her realization that she was alive and "everything was right" in that aliveness corresponded to that importance. The intensity of her feeling of joy reflected that.

Which returns us to the central aspect of flow - goals.

Goals And Feedback

As indicated in the description of psychic energy, everything in flow hinges on the meeting of goals, and knowing that is what is happening. Csikszentmihalyi was quite definite in saying that "unless a person learns to set goals and to recognize and gauge feedback in such activities, she will not enjoy them" (IBID,p.55). This emphasis on goals appeared appropriate when considering the descriptions of the co-researchers. In the times of positively experiencing their bodies, which one would expect would be enjoyable to them, they were congruent with their goals, and able to meet them. Doing so allowed them to experience the aliveness and connection discussed in themes III and IV, and to do so with an intensity which put them at an upper level of feeling attractive, healthy, and moving well.

As mentioned above, the importance of the goal to the individual made a difference in how meeting that goal was perceived. As teachers we are taught that it is important to help the student see the relevance to her own situation of the material being presented. The more a sense of ownership is developed by the student the greater the learning. It is assumed in this that ownership has within it a recognition of importance of learning the material. That is, that the goal of doing so becomes important to that person. But, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) pointed out, even with ownership such a goal may be trivial to the person, and success in meeting it will provide little enjoyment. We cannot assume that ownership means the same thing as having value.

This idea of having goals which are important to a person was reflected in theories on play. In discussing the play-work continuum Frost and Klein (1979) indicated that when the activity was play it was serious in that it mattered to the individual doing it. Joan talked about her moving well as "less like work and more like play". All of the co-researchers had within their descriptions a playfulness which showed not only in their words, but also in their demeanors. As they recalled the positive times of themselves they began to have the same 'glow' which I've seen on the faces of students who are 'playing around' with sitting on flutter boards in the water, or laughing at themselves and others as they try new movements in the gym. Those experiences were deliberately set up by myself to be ones of play, a description later reinforced by the students themselves. In this play were there goals which mattered to the participants? Perhaps the goal was to enjoy, but Csikszentmihalyi indicated that such enjoyment was contingent on the meeting of goals. This would appear to create a circular description of the goal of play being enjoyment, and the meeting of that goal is a component of the enjoyment. And the more important that enjoyment is to the participant as a goal the more intensely is that enjoyment experienced. As confusing as that appears it sounds accurate.

From the descriptions by the co-researchers it appeared that goals could change within an experience, facilitating a continuation of flow. This was most clearly seen in Connie's description of where she liked to ski, and why. She preferred a combination of hills and flat country. At times her goal would be the focussing on being technically correct, and directing and evaluating the activity of each part of her body. At other times - on the flat - her goal would be a trance-like state of not thinking at all, but "just going". The meeting of both of these goals within the skiing experience was basic to her enjoyment.

According to the model flow occurs when clear goals have immediate feedback. But what is recognized as feedback for one person is meaningless for another. Ingrid was very aware of feedback from her muscles when she was operating well, a sense of warmth and being "used". When she was not at an optimal level this feedback was not so discernable, and she knew she was not operating well. To other people such feedback might not matter, and therefore they would not even be aware that it was occurring. Attention, or psychic energy, would not be focused on the muscles and what was happening there would not enter consciousness. "Each of us is temperamentally sensitive to a certain range of information that we learn to value more than most other people do, and it is likely that we will consider feedback involving that information to be more relevant than others might" (IBID,p.57).

Csikszentmihalyi's insistence on the centrality of goals and immediate feedback in the flow experience contradicts a common belief that we are unaware of our bodies unless there is pain or difficulty. As Buytendijk (1974) noted, it is not until "our well-being is disturbed (that) one notices one's own body" (p.61). He was referring to the discomfort or pain that "can force us to transform the marginal body-consciousness to a thematic intentional consciousness of the body proper" (IBID,p.53). This belief would suggest that it is only times of psychic disorder which enter consciousness.

That is not the proposal of the flow model. It is true that within that model the positive feedback which occurs in flow frees the attention "to deal with the outer and inner environment" (Csikszentmihayli, 1990,p.39), but that 'inner environment' can still be focused on if that is consistent with the goal. This attention on self was shown in the descriptions of the co-researchers. The fact that they could recall times of experiencing the phenomenon revealed that they had paid attention to the feedback of the body as the phenomenon occurred. In other words, it was not only psychic disorder which "transformed the marginal body-consciousness" but a high level of psychic order.

To expand on this concept I would like to refer to an analogy that was given to me as a support to Buytendijk's viewpoint. Asking people to be aware of themselves when - for example - moving well would be like asking a fish to know that it was in the water. That was a taken-for-granted state of the fish, and therefore not available to the conscious mind. But the fish is aware if there is not enough oxygen in the water, what the currents are and how to use them to travel, and how much food is in the system. Perhaps the fish is not aware of 'wet' because it has never experienced 'dry' - a good thing in its case. But we know

what moving poorly is like, and therefore we can know what moving well feels like, and can describe that feeling to some extent. So the feedback mechanisms and the contrast do allow us to explore our awareness of ourselves in time of flow, whether it be in moving well, feeling healthy, or feeling attractive. The descriptions from the co-researchers show that to be true.

As mentioned in the 'flow' model, different feedback mechanisms mattered to different people. Those who were more knowledgable because of training and practice mentioned aspects of good technique which they looked for and noticed. The high knees in running and the grip and release in rowing told them that they were meeting their goal of doing the skill properly. From this it would appear that the more one knows of a skill the more cues can be paid attention to as feedback. This clarity and comprehensiveness in the feedback contributes towards improving and having the sense of accomplishment which is part of another component of enjoyment - challenge.

Even those who are not trained relative to proper technique can apparently discover it in the process of flow. I am reminded of different students in swim classes who had surfaced from the water with glowing faces to announce that "that was good". From my perspective they and the water had just been engaged in a battle which the water had won. Thrashing limbs, mouths gulping for air, panic-filled timing - they were indeed battered warriors. So I would ask them: "What was so good about it?" Invariably they would reply with a statement of proper technique relative to swimming which they had not received from me. "I really pushed the water back", "My head rolled easier", "I could feel the water carrying me". How did they know that this was good, and that this was the way it should be done? And how did they know to attend to this feedback as indicative of their reaching their goal? There appeared to be something in what was happening that resonated with the swimmer.

An interesting parable relative to resonating is connected with selecting a piece of marble for a sculpture. The person selecting hit the various pieces of marble with a square mallet, listening as he did so. After doing this a number of times he hit one, listened, then stopped and smiled. "This piece is healthy. It won't split when you cut into it". Over the years he had become attuned to the sound of healthy marble. By the sound created by the passage of the waves throughout the molecular structure of the marble he could tell which pieces would fall apart when struck by a chisel, and which pieces would maintain their

integrity. The resonance of the sound created by the hitting of the mallet on the marble matched the resonance within himself of health. His experience had made him a human tuning fork. (Ziegler, personal communication).

Perhaps within each of us there is a 'tuning fork' which vibrates when the right tone is struck. Training and practice can make us more sensitive to hearing that tone. And attention, or psychic energy, can open us to it even more. But it also appears that sometimes, apparently spontaneously, we feel the vibrations, hear the harmony, and recognize our own healthy 'marble'.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) talked about how this resonating was part of a "circular causality ... Attention shapes the self, and in turn is shaped by it" (IBID,p.34). As indicated above, something in the self causes us to pay attention and that focusing influences and changes the self which is paying attention. This appeared to occur with the swimmers mentioned above. Once they had noticed the power in pushing the water back they began to look for that feedback to tell them they were performing correctly. That became their goal, and the pressure of the water on their hands and the movement forward in the water gave them the feedback that they were meeting that goal. Ingrid and Joan looked for that same feedback, albeit through the blade of their paddle instead of their hands, when they noticed that they were moving well when rowing. What is intriguing to me is that initial resonating which apparently created the circular causality - where did that resonating come from?

One of the feedback 'mechanisms' that appeared to be shared by the co-researchers was that in times of well-being that which was wrong was missing. Sharon was most graphic in this as she recalled her light-filled experience of health as being so different from that which had gone on before. That absence of wrong may contribute to the initial resonating mentioned above. In the 'flow' model this is explained as "attention can be freely invested to achieve a person's goals, because there is no disorder to straighten out, no threat for the self to defend against" (IBID,p.40).

Another aspect of feedback noticed by the co-researchers was subtle and difficult to clarify, and that was the sense linked with that above. The strangeness of the wrong was gone. And there was a recognition of what was natural and right. The word 'recognize' "says we 're-know' the concept, as if we knew it once upon a time, forgot it, but then recognized it as an old friend" (Peck,1978,p.252). Peck is referring to an idea, but the same

recognition apparently occurred within the co-researchers as they knew the rightness, the being at home of the body well. Was it the naturalness of the child Ingrid dancing while everyone else slept which was known "once upon a time", or did it go even further back to a memory shared by our species when we once were as we were created to be?

Control

The feedback which comes in a time of flow or well-being gives "a feeling of control of affectance or influence ... you feel you are influencing whatever is happening" (Csikszentmihalyi,1979p.261). Being in control was very important to Ingrid, and was mentioned by the other co-researchers as a part of their sense of well-being. They enjoyed the feeling that they were doing what they wanted to do in the way that they wanted to do it. They were not participating out of a sense of duty or obligation, but of their own choice. Whether that choosing occurred because of the enjoyment or the other way around is a question that again brings in the concept of "circular causality" mentioned before.

An element of the co-researchers' descriptions which underlined how they were not participating out of a sense of duty was the hint of 'playing hookey'. For example, Sharon was not responding to expectations of her relative to an old role, nor was Joan going to do the expected wet change in the triathlon event. It was as if they had taken unauthorized 'time off'. They had taken active control of their behavior.

One aspect of control mentioned by Csikszentmihalyi - the paradox of control - was very pertinent to this study. At various times the co-researchers indicated that they had approached the activity in question with a "nonchalant attitude" (Joan). They had chosen not to worry about an end goal, such as winning a race or achieving a good time. That attitude was part of "the flow experience (which) is typically described as involving a sense of control - or, more precisely, as lacking the sense of worry about losing control" (Csikszentmihalyi,1990, p.59). Although the co-researchers did not indicate that it was control that concerned them their change in priorities regarding their focus allowed them to not worry about how they were doing.

Studies in stress management "suggest that people prefer activities in which they are given control, whether or not they actually use that control" (Feuerstein,1986,p.131). It did not seem to matter whether or not the control was real, but that the participants perceived themselves as having control over what was happening.

Control was also involved in considering why some people stayed healthy even when situations would indicate otherwise, termed "salutogenesis" by Antonovsky (1979). Antonovsky (1979,1987) discussed a manageability component of his 'sense of coherence' concept which was comparable to the aspect of control which was recognized as a major component of 'hardiness' (Kobaso, in Feuerstein,1986 and in Antonovsky,1987).

Both the stress research and the work regarding 'salutogenesis' remained within the medical model of a sick/not sick continuum of health. Csikszentmihalyi moved beyond that limited view into a wellness continuum which saw a positive dimension of health and living. "This encompasses levels of well-being, or stages or positions along a continuum of whole-person functioning, that encourage pictures of optimal existence" (Ardell,1982,p.15). This wellness continuum viewpoint was much more appropriate to the studies done in the present research.

Challenge

Whether it was the medical or the wellness model which was adopted all of the above researchers agreed that one's perception of a situation determined whether or not it was perceived as stressful. Selye (1974,1978) has become well known for coining the term 'eustress', meaning a "pleasant or curative stress" (1978,p.466). Demands of the internal or external environment create the response of stress. Lack of demand or stimuli can be "accompanied by an increase in stress, sometimes to the point of distress" (1974,p.32). In fact, one theory that play is used as an arousal modulation (Shultz,1979) speaks to the need to have a certain amount of stimulation. If that stimulation is perceived as a challenge or opportunity then it is accompanied by eustress rather than distress.

A component of the enjoyment phenomenon, or flow, was that of challenge (Csikszentmihalyi,1990). Selye saw that a certain amount of stimuli was necessary for homeostasis, or dynamic balance. Csikszentmihalyi proposed that homeostasis might produce pleasure, but not enjoyment. Enjoyment goes beyond simple pleasure. "The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile" (IBID,p.3). Whether something is difficult and/or worthwhile is an individual perception. This again relates to the goals which are set by a person. In order for enjoyment or flow to occur there must be a match between what is attempted and what is possible. This was well explored by Connie when she

suggested that climbing a vertical wall was not something she would do for enjoyment, as she felt that it was beyond her skill level. But in all the co-researchers' descriptions of positively experiencing their bodies there was this sense of balance between ability and challenge.

It was not so clear that the women had experienced themselves being "stretched to the limit". In the times of being attractive and moving well which were brought forward there was a sense of not pushing, of even being 'laid back'. Yet when the situations in which these phenomenon were experienced were explored it could be seen that the participants had been challenged. In these cases the challenges were below their optimal level and above that of simple homeostasis. As Study Three had not been asking for peak experiences of the phenomenon what was selected by the co-researchers was along the continuum of well-being, and not necessarily at the top. However, when the women were describing times of feeling physically healthy they did relate to the results of being stretched in the challenging. Joan and Ingrid and Connie all related to having pushed themselves physically to the point that they were at a high level of physical fitness. With these three women there was a strong sense of accomplishment in their descriptions of - for example - getting to the top of a steep hill when on a cycling tour. They had achieved that which they had set out to do, and the knowledge and the physical repercussions of that were now incorporated into who they were.

Sharon's challenge had not been as directly involved pushing herself physically, but in the facing of serious surgery, and in the rehabilitation process which followed. Not only was there the realization that the darkness of her illness was gone, but there was a sense of having done it, of having recovered.

There was an apparent discrepancy in that the degree of challenge in the first two phenomena was less than what was reported upon in the times of being healthy. When recalling times of feeling attractive or moving well the women had placed themselves within the actual time of doing and being. When remembering feeling healthy they were referring to how they felt after the stretching challenge had been met. When discussing the enjoyment of flow when there had been an "unusual investments of attention" Csikszentmihalyi (1990,p.46) said:

> None of these experiences may be particularly
> pleasurable at the time they are taking place,
> but afterward we think back on them and say,

> "That really was fun" and wish they would happen again. After an enjoyable event we know that we have changed, that our self has grown ...
> (IBID,p.46)

There was one more aspect of challenge in flow which was applicable to Study Three. When talking about enjoying friends Csikszentmihayli (1990) suggests that finding new challenges to do together is as important as having common goals. Ingrid and Joan both talked about the challenge of trying to improve their rowing ability with others, and Joan mentioned a time when she and a friend enjoyed becoming synchronized as they ran. In order to accomplish these tasks the women needed to concentrate, another component of enjoyment.

Concentration

> The first thing people mention (about things going well) is the issue of concentration, or involvement, which is described as a merging of action and awareness. You are not thinking about doing something, you are doing it, and while you're doing it you are not aware of alternatives, nor are you aware of certain other problems.
> (Csikszentmihalyi,1979,p.260)

This description of concentration was especially true for Connie when she was talking about times of moving well. She was the only one of the co-researchers who indicated that in such times she was in an altered state of control similar to an Ideal Performing State (Unestahl,1983). This state has within it a similar concentration to the state of flow.

> A more intense attentiveness to a narrow attention area (concentration) is accompanied by a general inattentiveness (dissociation) to everything outside this area. (IBID,p.15)

Although the other co-researchers did not refer directly to being in a trance or of being totally unaware as did Connie, there was a sense throughout all the interviews of the 'now'. In the times of well-being the co-researchers were only aware of what was happening at that moment. They were totally involved in the situation, whether it was being the key

speaker, walking down the street, or performing a pike solto. On the one hand, their ability was such that they did not have to worry about the technique required, and therefore there was little, if any, psychic disorder. On the other hand there was enough challenge in what was occurring that there was no room for them to be distracted by other preoccupations, including thinking about themselves. They were fully occupied in what they were doing. Indeed, the "action and the awareness was merged" into one experience.

One other aspect of concentration which Csikszentmihalyi brought out relative to flow was the idea that "the clearly structured demands of the activity impose order, and exclude the interference of disorder in consciousness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990,p.58). It was not obvious that the experiences the co-researchers described as positive were "clearly structured". But when describing times which were not times of well-being the impact of structure became clearer. At the wedding where she did not feel comfortable Sharon was unsure of the rules, and expressed this by not knowing if she fit in. When going to the hospital for treatment Ingrid experienced chaos in the conflicting information she was given. To a novice skier the movements and adjustments to the terrain appear to have no rhyme or reason, but to Connie there was a logic to every action. And the rules of good social interaction were plain to Joan, both when speaking and at a party. Having the skills to meet the challenge, as discussed in the previous section, has within it the awareness of the necessary structure, and therefore there is the order, thus facilitating the concentration. And all of this contributes to the sense of effortlessness which is the next component of enjoyment to be considered.

Effortlessness

"It just happened". That phrase or understanding was basic to all the descriptions of times of moving well. Although the co-researcher may have been working harder than normal, that was not how the situation was perceived. All of the body was contributing to the action, and there was nothing, either internally or externally, hindering the smoothness of movement. Although the idea of easefulness was not as direct in the exploration of feeling healthy or attractive, there was still a sense of being able to do what was wanted without any problem.

In the theme 'Being Able' there was a discussion of an awareness of having reserves of energy, but this was not in a sense of something being added. Instead it seemed to be

that blockages which had formally closed off the flow had been removed. According to the flow model the concentration on challenging goals and the choice of not worrying about control opened up the channels and there was the energy. It had always been there, but forces within and without had restricted easy passage. This concept of blockages to energy flow is found in many cultures. In China Taoism talks about the need for the free flow of chi (vital energy) from tan tian (center) throughout the network. The network, in this case, is not restricted to the individual body, but is seen as a web of interconnections extending as far as the person can connect. There is "a unity of man and Nature, or Nature and man forming one body" (Veith,1972, p.246). In the Western culture Wilheim Reich was one of those who contributed to an understanding of blockages. Focusing on the blocking of emotions rather than directly looking at energy he proposed that there were "individual characteristic postural and movement patterns that result from the inhibition of selective affects" (Lewis, 1984,p.154). Whether East or West, the recognition that there is something in the way of a free flow of energy indirectly states that in our original/natural state, before the blockages were put in place, we were in the effortlessness of flow. This may explain the sense of returning discussed under the resonance of feedback. When we are in an optimal state of inner experience (Csikszentmihalyi,1990) we are tapping into memories of the way we were before our responses to life created inner dams.

The Self

As in the previous two studies understanding of the self by the co-researchers was affected by considering the physicalness of who they were. If the last statement under 'Effortlessness' is accurate, this might have been even more true because the consideration was focused on optimal states. For it was in those times that the co-researchers were touching upon who they were underneath the learned masks and blockages of every-day. There was "a kind of a loss of ego, or loss of a personal kind of caring about the results" (Csikszentmihalyi,1979,p.261). According to Freudian theory "the ego is the part of the mind comprising the thought and perceptual processes involved in recognition, remembrance and action relevant to satisfying instincts ... in the external world" (Maddi,1976,p.31). The ego is built up out of experiences, as is a learned way of being. In the flow model Csikszentmihalyi was stating that the learned way was put aside because performance as an end-goal was unimportant.

> People become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing.
> (Csikszentmihalyi,1990,p.53)

Not only is the "splitting of the observer or the ego reflecting on the performance" (Csikszentmihalyi,1979,p.261) out of the picture, but the splitting of self from the environment is also gone. There is a wholeness to the experience which was integral to the enjoyment. What the co-researchers were expressing was the whole self that was participating in and connected to everything that was in the moment.

In a study investigating spirituality and wilderness adventure one of the participants described 'spiritual' as:

> It's almost an intangible quality that I sense in myself and the world around me. It's a sense of wholeness and being at one with everything that's around me, both with the people and the natural world. Wholeness or maybe completeness.
> (Stringer,1992,p.16)

The quotation from Stringer's respondent could have been placed within Study Three, so closely did it match what the co-researchers said when talking about times of well-being. From this comparison it could be said that the sense of self experienced by the co-researchers was a sense of the spiritual.

In the reflection section of Study Two Niebuhr (1941) was quoted as describing a man's spirit as that which was outside "of nature, life, himself, his reason, and the world" (p. 4). From this discussion that definition would appear to be too restrictive, for a person's spirit appeared to be that which was also deep within those aspects. It was the spirit which drew everything into the completeness of being whole.

A book by natives about their world view describes wholeness as one of the first principles.

> Wholeness. All things are interrelated. Everything in the universe is part of a single whole. Everything is connected in some way to everything else. We can understand something only if we can understand how it is connected to everything else.
> (Four Worlds Development Project,1988,p.28)

The material on Taoism mentioned earlier has this same understanding within it. Perhaps it is a practice of only our white Western culture to place differentiation at the top of human development, as seen in the discussion on the development of a body image. This situation undoubtably arose out of the Cartesian understanding. More recent theories of growth suggest that the process of differing ourselves from the external world needs to be balanced by an allowing of integration in which there is no real external or internal (Csikszentmihalyi,1990; Peck,1978; Sheehy,1976).

According to the natives and the Taoists this balance is our natural state. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) appears to contradict that approach when he says that: "Only when a person invests equal amounts of psychic energy in the two processes (differentiation and integration) ...is the self likely to reflect complexity" (IBID,p.42). There is a contradiction if natural is equated with simple and non-developing. But if 'natural' is seen as the process of moving towards an optimal self then the two ways of thinking move towards each other, and perhaps even meet.

In times of flow there is a loss of self-consciousness in that the focus is no longer on the self but on the activity in which one is engaged. This was true for the co-researchers, as revealed in their descriptions of times of well-being. If they were aware of themselves it was not as a person separate from what was around them. In many cases this "loss of the sense of self separate from the world around it ...(was) ..accompanied by a feeling of union with the environment" (Csikszentmihalyi,1990,p.63). In Study Three this "union with the environment" was most clearly seen when the co-researchers were in natural outdoor settings. Although Joan was the only person to explicitly describe how that union made her feel the other co-researchers also referred to how important it was to be interacting with the natural elements, including the weather.

When we are not separated from the air and the sun and the rain we are forced to experience:

> The humbling primal influences of nature.
> Wilderness experiences directly expose
> participants to the primal influences of
> nature and the elements, fostering a sense
> of humility in relation to the natural world.
> (Hendee et al,1988,p.14)

This was certainly Joan's response to being in the mountains. Why would being

humbled be seen as part of a time of well-being? In our society we are geared to value confidence, and see that as the other end of the continuum from humility. It may be that we have confused humiliation with humility. For in the humbleness which Joan was describing there was the sense of being part of something which was much greater than her - therefore her sense of insignificance.

> When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?
>
> (Holy Bible,Psalm 8,p.503)

Yet Joan did not feel she was nullified as a person, but in some sense she felt exalted. This something of which she was a part was perceived as an Other of great value - and therefore, as a part of it she was likewise of value.

Unfortunately the term 'exalted' has become, for some people, associated with organized religion, and as a result they turn away from the concept. The dictionary defines 'exalt' as "to raise up, especially in rank, power, or dignity, to elate the mind or spirits" (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary,1974,p.250). Defined this way 'exalted' not only complements the idea of confidence, but also relates well to the calm elation which was part of the co-researchers' sense of unity with Nature.

For three of the co-researchers many of their times of well-being occurred in or were connected with being the mountains. Perhaps it was not accidental that their memories of feeling good about themselves were often linked with being in high places.

> In the oldest religions, everything was alive, not supernaturally but naturally alive. There were only deeper and deeper streams of life, vibrations of life more and more vast. So rocks were alive, but a mountain has a deeper, vaster life than a rock, and it is much harder for a man (or woman) to bring his (or her) spirit, or his (or her) energy into contact with the life of the mountain, as from a great standing well of life, than it was to come in contact with the rock.
>
> (D.H.Lawrence, as cited in Lehrman,1988,p.26)

This coming "into contact with the life of the mountain" was a challenge which would stretch one to the limits, and it is therefore not surprising, following the flow model, that

doing so brought deep enjoyment.

The "close interaction with some Other" described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p.64) involved the bringing of one's spirit into contact as Lawrence talked about it above. This approaches a different way of being, one which some describe as sacred. This is reflected by the inclusion of this word in the titles of the books which bring forward that which resonated with the descriptions of the co-researchers - The Sacred Tree, The Sacred Landscape.

> The mode which we call sacred is one where inner focus and outer focus are balanced and blended, where there is a reciprocal mirroring of ideas and sentiment from within and imagery and sensation from without. It is a waking trance state ripe with knowledge. This knowledge seems to come to us from a wise source which calls us home.
>
> (Lehrman,1988,p.6)

The feedback of resonating speaks to the idea of coming home. In the warmth of this home we are permitted - nay, challenged - to be ourselves, and perhaps to be(come) our Selves.

> We see ourselves more clearly under such conditions, and we may be both humbled and inspired by the beauty and power of the natural world. ... Our original selves reemerge, long buried beneath the artificial restrictions and patterns of society and culture.
>
> (Hendee et at,1988,p.14f)

As suggested in the flow model, we come to know more about ourselves and move towards the complexity mentioned earlier. But this apparently is not something which occurs automatically. It "must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person" (Csikszentmihalyi,1990,p.2). And it must be part of clear goals in which one can invest much psychic energy. In doing so there is that loss of self-consciousness as what ever is unessential to meeting those goals is dropped.

This paring down to the essentials may be part of the co-researchers linking slimness to times of positively experiencing themselves. At first I was troubled by these comments as I believed that they were part of the co-researchers 'buying into' our society's demand for

thinness for women. But there was more to it than that. There was a sense that getting rid of the excess allowed one to focus only on what was needed. When they lost weight because of their activity levels - as was the case in each report - it was as if they were in training.

In this paring down there is an awareness of the muscles and the skeletal framework. This awareness was seen as rewarding to one of the young women with anorexia nervosa with whom I was in contact. Perhaps she too was attempting to get down to the bare bones of herself. When natives are preparing for a vision quest in which they are seeking their purpose, one of the ways they prepare is by fasting. Other spiritual disciplines also employ fasting as an integral part of learning about the self. Jesus went into the desert for forty days to fast and, to some extent, to quest. Some Eastern philosophies advocate fasting to prepare one's self for visions. It may be that the unhealthiness of the anorexic's approach involves the motivation that she has for the fasting, and the lack of spiritual preparation and focus throughout.

> Loss of self-consciousness can lead to self-transcendence, to a feeling that the boundaries of our being have been pushed forward. This feeling is not just a fancy of the imagination, but is based on a concrete experience of close interaction with some Other, an interaction that produces a rare sense of unity with these usually foreign entities.
>
> (Csikszentmihalyi,1990,p.64)

Time Change

According to the flow model, linked with both the concentration and transcendence of flow is a change in the way that time is perceived. There is:

> an altered time sense (in which the individual) loses track of time altogether. Later he may even feel that for the duration of his flowing he was lifted out of time entirely, disattached from internal and external clocks.
>
> (Csikszentmihalyi,1975,p.87).

This component of enjoyment was not emphasized by the co-researchers, but did appear in the surprise of Joan and Ingrid when they realized that they had made a good time in their running or swimming. In those situations they did not feel that they were

pushing themselves, and so probably felt that they were taking more time than usual to complete the course.

When we are being active one way in which we judge the passage of time is to estimate the expenditure of our personal resources, such as energy. When those signals of expenditure are missing - the breathing is still easy, the muscles are just warming up - then we feel that little time has passed. Or, conversely, we may feel that a lot of time has passed because it didn't hurt as much as normally.

One difference which Connie noticed relative to time was that she didn't feel that she had to 'fill' it with thoughts and prayers and wonderings when she was operating at her optimal level. She described it as not thinking at all, and that was one feedback aspect that told her she was moving well. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) would say that it was the need to concentrate fully on the task at hand that kept her too occupied to be distracted. This kind of concentration - the not-thinking kind - was that involved in:

> ... recognizing that you are in flow. The purpose of the flow is to keep on flowing, not looking for a peak or utopia but staying in the flow. ... Any lapse in concentration will erase it. And yet while it lasts consciousness works smoothly, action follows action seamlessly. ... the action carries us forward as if by magic.
>
> (Csikszentmihalyi,1990,p.54)

Study Three had not asked the co-researchers to describe optimal times, and so they were free to choose whatever level of feeling attractive, healthy or moving well they wished. In comparing their responses with Csikszentmihalyi's components of the enjoyment phenomenon it would appear that they chose to recall times of flow, in which their goals were met, the challenges they gave themselves matched their skills, their concentration opened them to an effortlessness, and they lost their self-concern to find their self.

FINALLY

And so, said Alice, after all is said and done,
what has been said and done?
vsk

What Was Said

What did the ten co-researchers say across the three studies? Although each study contributed different information and/or emphasized it in a different way, key elements about how the women experienced their physical selves consistently emerged. These key elements were the developmental nature of body image, the relative unimportance of body image in optimal experiences, the place of the body itself, changes in awareness and the knowing of self, wholeness, the importance of nature, and various levels in all these elements.

Developmental Nature

The developmental nature of a healthy body image and a sense of physical well-being emerged in all three studies. There was an awareness of the process of becoming aware of the body in order to be able to lose awareness of it in times of feeling good. This progression of awareness was also seen in the discussions of skill levels, and the level necessary for optimal experiences of the inner self.

Development included changes in relationship to and with the body, specific to times of transition, whether gradual due to age and experience, or acute because of some sort of trauma. The responses given to various questions led to the concept that a stable body image required a stable sense of self, something which appeared to begin to emerge between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-seven.

Where in the above developmental processes one was had an effect on whether or not a person could be open to the positive experiencing of her physical self. In order to break out of the perceived requirements of movement and behavior so that one could enjoy a state of flow one had to have experienced the proceeding steps of development enough to have a base from which to leap. That is to say, there had to be a certain amount of proficiency in place before the physical aspects of the self could operate correctly enough to feel physically attractive and healthy, and in order to be able to move well and appreciate

that that was what was occurring.

An integral part of the process of developing towards being positive about the physicalness of the self was the often-gradual acceptance of what and how one was. At times this acceptance was described as the not-being of the opposite state. For example, in times of feeling good about one's self (Study One) the rejection of parts of the body which was the normal state of affairs was missing.

The first two studies discussed in some detail how acceptance of the self appeared to be linked with a sense that how one was at that moment was congruent with the self-image which one had and/or desired to be. The self-acceptance often was linked with the working toward a specific state, whether it was being active or effective or confident. Because these aspects of being had been the focus of intentional work the individual was aware of them and was prepared to recognize if the working was successful. The acceptance of the self, in part and in whole, was linked with the ability to have that which was important to the individual.

Study Three picked this concept up in the descriptions which indicated that the meeting of functional requirements made it possible to accept the physical self enough so that health and attractiveness of well-moving could be experienced. Because functional requirements were being met any conflicts with external and internal feedback ceased to exist, and therefore the positive comments of others could be accepted because they agreed with what the individual was experiencing at the time.

A commonality amongst the three studies was the unexpected lack of mention of the impact of others upon self-perception. The media and the mirror were mentioned in the second study, but almost as a passing thought. There was some discussion about conflicts between what others thought and self-perception, with the latter assuming more importance to the individual than the former. This was connected to the developmental sequence of core and situational self-esteem. As well, positive experiences of the self may occur in connection with lack of concern about the opinions of others.

Lack of Importance of 'Body Image'

Originally this research was designed to investigate what a healthy body image would be/look like. But right from the first study it became apparent that the concept of 'healthy body image' might be an oxymoron - that is, "a rhetorical figure in which incongruous or

contradictory terms are combined" (American Heritage Dictionary,1992,p.1296). In Jane's descriptions of times of feeling good she kept indicating that she was unaware of herself when she was feeling good, and therefore she did not have an 'image' of herself. There was an overall feeling, not an image. If she did have an image of herself then she was too self-conscious and therefore would not be able to be at her optimal level. This understanding travelled across the three studies.

An investigation of the sources of the three words in the term 'healthy body image' appeared to reinforce the idea that it was an oxymoron. The word 'health' originated from the Anglo-Saxon word 'hal' which meant 'whole', and 'sound'. 'Body' was of Anglo-Saxon and Old High German origin, and was linked with 'soma', referring once again to 'whole' and 'sound'. So the term 'healthy body' was almost redundant, but definitely not contradictory.

The word 'image' broke away from the concept of whole and referred to a likeness or picture, and included within it the idea of imitating. By bringing in this word there was an immediate sense of separation, of distancing. Wholeness is being all together; 'image' is being apart. This understanding of image appeared to be underneath the subtle rejection by the co-researchers of it as a part of positive experiences of themselves. In those experiences they were very aware of themselves as whole, and therefore 'image' did not belong.

However, if a 'picture' of one's self was to be considered, it must be done in the light of it being multifaceted. All three studies, but especially the second one, brought out some of the many possible aspects of body image, such as shape, action, and spirit, as well as the interaction of these with each other and other factors involved in the context of the situation of the time.

The responses of the co-researchers in all three studies had indicated that an important aspect of having positive experiences of the physical self was the shift from the verb 'to have', as in 'to have a body image', to the verb 'to be', as in being healthy or attractive. The women were not describing having a healthy body image, but were instead illuminating the phenomenon of being healthy, or well-being.

The Place of the Body

The place of the body in times of feeling good, relative to a healthy body image, and in positively experiencing the physical self initially appears as obvious - that is, as central to the phenomenon. The first two studies appeared to be saying something else. In those studies the body was not considered at all, or only thought of in a functional way. Jean was really the only one of the earlier co-researchers who identified her body as herself.

The functional aspect of the body was also noted in the last study, as it was recognized as a kinesthetic awareness and feedback mechanism integral to the experience of well-being. But in this study there began to be more of a sense of the body as self, especially in the sense of wholeness which underlaid all the descriptions in Study Three. The co-researchers were aware of their bodies, not as an object of the self, but their bodies as their total self. And the co-researchers were aware of that total self as but a part of everything which was occurring. This awareness was characterized by an openness, a simple receptivity which left no room for negative judgements. Everything was good, and that included the body within that everything. In the manner of co-constitution the individual within the everything contributed to the goodness as well as received it. Therefore the individual was likewise good. And the physical self, as the incarnation of the individual, was likewise good.

Larson provides a description of what the place of the body can be.

> God's plan to reconcile me in all things and all relationships includes my relationship to my own body as well. I can move from hating and despising and being ashamed of my body to making peace with it. Cooperation with a former enemy and respecting (her) as a teacher is a giant step forward and the mark of true spirituality. But it is a far cry from liking, loving and enjoying (her) - yea, celebrating (her) as one of God's good gifts to me. Wholeness ripens in the area of the physical, when I can truly love my body as a gift of God, for in reality I am my body and my body is me. In other relationships, real love does not diminish with old age and failing faculties. It grows and deepens as new treasures are discovered. So might we love our physical selves.
>
> (Larson,1978,p.136)

The Self

One of the strongest 'findings' of the three studies was how the awareness of the self was different in the times being recalled from the taken-for-granted state of apparent normalacy. In the first and last studies this change would be in agreement with the flow model, as in those studies the women were considering optimal experiences. Even the second study, which was simply searching for how women might see themselves on a day-to-day basis, indicated that reflecting on the questions led the co-researchers to a different understanding of themselves.

Initially there was an unawareness of self in the positive experiences, as the co-researchers were much more focused on what was happening. In this way they appeared to be transcending themselves. To some extent the personalness of the self was lost in a larger awareness, a bigger picture. But a sense of self was always present. It varied from the sense of self as separate and the end of the act of perception, to a sense of the self as connected and but a part of a larger Other.

The sense of self as accepted and acceptable was a key component of the optimal experiences recalled and described. This was very evident in the discussion in Study One where the women tried to clarify in their own thinking the difference between self-awareness and self-consciousness. Each of the examples which they gave under the latter heading involved negative perceptions of themselves. This was true across the studies. The self-consciousness prohibited them from entering into a state of enjoyment or flow.

But within the times of enjoyment or flow there was an awareness of the self, in that the self was acceptable, and even pretty tremendous. Often this appreciated self was related to their spiritual nature which the co-researchers linked with their body. When the women felt that what they were doing and being was congruent with their 'true' selves they were referring to being strong at the center, or moving with a purpose, or being vitally alive.

The spiritual nature was also revealed by the inclusion of emotions in the descriptions given by the co-researchers. Joy, happiness-in-self, bubbly and tingly were some of the affective elements mentioned. Very often we try to put discussions of emotions and spirituality into such an academic format that they become abstract and distant. It is unreasonable to try to consider the 'self' without realizing the deep centralness to that self of spirit and emotion. This is especially true when focussing on the physical aspect of being.

Feelings are bodily responses that are animated

> by intelligence and spiritual affectivity, or, conversely, embodied intelligent and affective responses. Feelings, then, are neither antirational nor irrational. Let us consider feelings as the wholeness of human response to the realities experienced by the person.
> (Nelson,1978,p.31)

Connected with feelings is the attitude which one chooses to have. The co-researchers described how their deliberately choosing a particular attitude with which they would approach the activity or situation had a significant impact on the degree of wellness enjoyed. Deciding, either consciously or subconsciously, to be unconcerned about end-goals or the 'right way' freed them to fully enter into what they were doing without distractions. In doing so they became more aware of their own abilities. They realized that they were skilful, fit, competent, active, in control, strong and charismatic. Because of these abilities they were enjoyably challenged and not overwhelmed.

Wholeness

> A succinct definition of wholeness came from the late Eric Berne, the father of transactional analysis and author of The games people play ... 'It is the ability of the person to say 'Yes!', 'No!', and 'Whoopee!'
> (Larson,1978,p.25).

The discussion regarding choice of attitude, above, indicated that the co-researchers were exercising their ability to say 'yes' and 'no'. There also seemed to be a fair amount of 'whoopee'. In the section regarding body image the root word for health - hal - was translated as whole. This element kept surfacing whenever the co-researchers were talking about times of well-being.

The totality of the experiences described was expressed in two ways. A major contributor to the experience was a sense of connection between the co-researcher and that which was around, including the natural environment and other people. There was also the connection within the self, so that the person perceived herself as complete and whole.

The women's responses emphasized how being open to the situation contributed to the phenomenon of wellness. There was also the necessary dialogue between what was inside and outside of one's self in the element of connecting. There was a sense of being

more than the self as personal boundaries either expanded or became permeable.

The three studies underlined the fact that there was an acceptance of whatever was being connected. Under the section above, The Self, I talked about how that acceptance was revealed to the person. But in that emerging awareness was included the concept that others and the environment were also perceived as acceptable. There was a sense of trusting the self and the other which was a subtle and integral part of the acceptance.

The involvement of others in these times of well-being was more at the level of a reciprocal affective nature. The people around were seen more as playmates and team members than as feedback mechanisms which determined personal worth. For example, it was sometimes the synchronization of the movement with another which contributed to the sense of moving well. The operating in concert, not in conflict, was perceived as having a positive effect.

The studies which focused on times of feeling good about oneself shared descriptions of intraconnection which underlined the importance of the removal of barriers among aspects of the self. In the congruency with self-image which was mentioned earlier there was the sense of being complete and whole. The internal, kinesthetic feedback indicated that all parts of the self were moving in unison and in such a way that there was no sense of 'they', but only a sense of the 'I' in the doing.

The interaction of the wholeness and the individuality of the self was difficult for both the co-researchers and myself to try to describe. So once again we borrow from one who paints well with words.

> Out of the silence and loneliness there came to her a vivid sense of her own individuality. The sense of unity with created things made her feel not a pea in a pod but a separate unity, and she wondered why. Perhaps, she thought, if you come, by yourself, very close to the fount of life in nature, you are washed clean of the follies that seem to lie like a coat of dust over men when they move about the worlds in herds, kicking it up and covering themselves with it, so that they all look exactly alike. She did not feel dusty now, she felt washed, with her true colours showing, and she could have shouted for joy - she was becoming herself.
>
> (Goudge,1935,p.74)

The Importance of Nature

Goudge's description above points out two aspects which the co-researchers likewise brought out relative to nature; its importance and its relationship to their natural selves. Some of the co-researchers were explicit in their feelings about nature, in saying that was where they wanted to be, and that being 'a part of nature' was something which they loved. Others were not so clear as far as the importance of nature to them. But in almost all cases times of well-being occurred in the out-of-doors, and preferably within that which was natural rather than man-made.

There was also the discovery of themselves as 'nature', in the apparent return to a more elemental self than that which they experienced in an urban setting.

> A sophisticated human being can become primitive.
> What this really means is that the human way of
> life changes. Old values change, become linked
> to the landscape with its plants and animals.
> This new experience requires a working knowledge
> of those multiplex and cross-linked events
> usually referred to as nature. It requires a
> measure of respect for the inertial power within
> such natural systems. When a human gains this
> working knowledge and respect, that is called
> 'being primitive'. The converse, of course, is
> equally true: the primitive can become sophisticated,
> but not without accepting dreadful psychological damage.
> (Herbert,1976,p.69)

> The higher I go, not only is the air getting thinner,
> but perhaps the layers guarding what already lie
> inside me are thinning as well. ... For every tree
> that bows, a layer inside me disappears. 10,20,50,
> a 100, a 1000. How many have I acquired in my
> 24 years? Suddenly there are none left and I am
> open ... the barriers guarding my reality dissipated,
> allowing the real me to be shared with everything.
> (Lenders et al,1991,p.35)

Levels

Within the responses of the co-researchers was also the idea of various levels of the phenomenon being described. There was the concept that achieving something contributed towards a sense of feeling good, but that such feelings were often short-term and of a lesser intensity than those times which had connection and acceptance as their core. The 'doing'

of achieving rather than the 'done' of achievement was central to the long-lasting awareness of well-being.

The level of feeling good was tied in some way to the level of physical fitness. The co-researchers talked about how their fitness levels allowed them to participate in that which was part of the phenomenon of well-being. It was not simply being fit which led to the positive experience, but what was also important was what was allowed to happen because of the fitness level.

In the last study the descriptions which were given of feeling physically healthy and attractive, and of moving well, were not simply the opposite sides of the coin of feeling ugly, sick and clumsy. Nor were these times selected from the taken-for-granted state of relative wellness. These moments of positively experiencing the physical self went beyond these points on the continuum towards a well-being which was a different awareness of self which was more than the far end of the opposite side.

What Was Done

I find it hard to know where to begin in any attempt to describe the 'procedure' of this research. Certain things did happen before others, but not necessarily in the linear fashion seen in quantitative research - at least as it is reported. As indicated by the section on 'Shift' being open to the material provided by the co-researchers led to a revamping of the focus of the studies. Within the interviews themselves 'new' questions were asked because of what had been said before. The co-researchers' personal interest in the material led to a good interaction with the material, and impacted of both them and I over the period of the work. But I will try to present an ordered look at what was done within this particular piece of research.

Why Qualitative?

To some extent the reasoning for the selection of the qualitative approach rather than the quantitative was covered in the introductory chapters. These reasons were underlined as the work continued, and personal reasons for the selection became clearer.

Prior to this research I had been involved as a co-researcher in the work of a psychologist friend who was investigating times when counselling had 'worked'. Both the process and the focus on positive experiences had been beneficial to me personally. The

simple question asked in the project on counselling had elicited a rich vein of memories and deepened my own understandings. Past episodes involving quantitative research had been oppressive because of its invasive and using nature. As a therapist I did not want to expose others to those problems, especially when such a solid alternative was available. In a discussion with Warren Ziegler (1990) an analogy was developed which helped me to understand some differences in the two approaches. It was the comparison of watching a feather as it was tossed about in a relatively stiff breeze, and riding that same feather. The experience of the feather would be totally different, and neither would be 'wrong'. The person who had been riding the feather would have experienced the feather in a way which would make little sense to the one watching. Only another 'rider' would be able to comprehend. The test of validity, in this case, would be if other 'riders' found the description of riding to have fidelity to their own.

So, for this research, I chose to ride the feather of the body well, and if others who have done so find resonance with the descriptions, then this work is valid.

Why These People?

Some reasoning behind the selection of the co-researchers was given in the introduction to the three studies. The following is a brief expansion on why it was seen as necessary to have active and skilful persons as co-researchers.

Accepting the theory that culture and society do have an impact on how one sees herself leads to the recognition of at least one 'fact'. The number of options available to a person is somewhat regulated by how acceptable that person is. For example, an obese person will often find it difficult to participate in many physical activities because of societal expectations. That individual is the last to be chosen on a team because she is seen as inept, regardless of her skill level. Because the number and type of experiences are limited the potential for instances of positive physical experiences are less than with someone who is slim. The co-researchers, by their natural builds, were generally exposed to many more opportunities to explore different types of activities, and in this exploration the chance of experiencing 'flow' was increased.

The analytical training and possible nature which was present in all the co-researchers posed an unexpected 'problem'. The participants wanted to reflect upon what they were saying before they had finished saying it. We needed to work at describing rather

than analyzing. Part of the reason for this 'problem' was that the women were true co-researchers. They took upon themselves the focus of whichever study they were in, and maintained their involvement over the main part of the research. In the case of the third study this was both helpful and unnecessarily confusing. Because there was more than one interview sessions each co-researcher brought to the succeeding time together ponderings which had been prompted in the time before. These ponderings were sometimes of an analytical nature, or the remnants of other memories connected to the question. By the deliberate focusing on particular memories a sensitivity was cultivated which extended into the other areas of the study, so that each subsequent interview was flavoured by what had been tasted before. What was confusing was the assumption by the co-researchers that times already described, for example, relative to being healthy, could not be brought in to their memory of moving well. Once they were informed that that was not the case then they were felt free to continue.

Why These Questions?

> How few answers do we possess! How many phenomena
> are ignored because they do not fall into accepted
> categories! Ours is a world that has developed
> along materialistic, mechanistic lines. But might
> there not be other ways? Might there not be dozens
> of other ways, unknown and unguessed because of the
> one we found that worked?
> (L'amour,1987,p.112)

The reasons for the initial questions being employed in the three studies were given in the introduction to the studies. But there were other questions involved, those brought in by myself in response to what had been said before. A certain type of question was used to try to dig deeper into what the co-researcher meant by words such as 'clicked in'. Questions such as, 'Can you be more specific?', 'Can you describe a particular time when that happened?', or 'What does that 'clicking in' feel like?'.

In various readings the idea of multidimensional sampling was introduced, and that was also employed, in a variety of ways. The main reason for doing so was again an attempt to bring out more detail in the descriptions, or to help the co-researcher when nothing seemed to be there. Another reason was the recognition that everyone has at least one mode of thinking with which it is easier for her to relate, and solicitating different

dimensions would allow her to use her own. Some examples of the different dimensions involved:

- with Joan, a musician: 'If you were hearing music at that time, what would it be like?'

- with Connie, having trouble with the phenomenon of being attractive: 'If you were going to help yourself feel physically attractive what would you do?'

- with Sharon, again relative to feeling attractive: 'When you look in the mirror at that time what do you see?

- with all of the co-researchers: 'Were there any particular emotions you associate with that time?'

- with all: 'How do you feel right now, having talked about it (whatever 'it' was in that study) for a while?'

Some of the questions which came up in an interview emerged because of what had been brought forward in a previous interview, either with the same person or with someone else. This was noted earlier relative to my asking Ingrid if being outside had anything to do with her feeling good, because Jane had brought that into her description. Often the co-researcher would say that whatever had been brought forward was not relevant to her, but then be inspired to describe what was appropriate. Another rule regarding the type of questions to ask dealt with the seeking after detail (vanManen, personal communication). The validity of this rule came into question relative to two aspects. As shown in Study Three, the wholeness nature of the phenomenon did not lend itself to the noticing of detail. This became particularly noticeable in the body and verbal language of the co-researchers when they sought for specifics in their descriptions. When they simply described a particular time of feeling good the whole demeanor would lighten, and they would become alert and often smiling. As they attempted to become aware of - for example - how a part of their body felt at the time being recalled, the state they had entered into began to drain away. That type of awareness did not apparently fit with the phenomenon.

Another difficulty may be the individual ability as an observer. Ingrid indicated that in general she did not notice detail, or even specific times. She seemed to remember overall impressions and not specific detail. Is that a type of learning style? If so, would the giving of detail within the interview be within her ability?

Recall

Studies One and Three deliberately employed the agent of recall in the seeking of descriptions. In the second study recall was also used in prompting the co-researchers, but its involvement was much less. As indicated earlier, recalling certain times in their lives had an discernable effect on the co-researchers. They did not simply remember: they relived.

> Any memory reopens time lost to us and invites us to recapture the situation evoked.
> (Merleau-Ponty,1962,p.85)

In some ways the interviews were similar to guided imagery.

> Milton Erickson ... understood that to begin a story by saying 'Remember when' was already to begin to place the audience in an altered state of consciousness - the very act of remembering is a kind of trance in itself.
> (Hammerschlag,1988,p.i)

Language

There was a problem for the co-researchers in trying to use the English language, or, indeed, any verbal language, to describe what they were recalling. They were dealing with tacit knowledge.

> Tacit (intuitive) knowledge is that which one knows or understands based on experience and is not expressible by language.
> (Stringer et al,1992,p.13)

In a way the participants were being asked to do the impossible, and they reflected that in their frustration. Time and again I was reminded of how valuable videotaping the sessions would have been, for although verbal language was limited, body language was very expressive. But eventually words would have been needed to communicate, as in this writing. Fortunately, the co-researchers were very articulate women, and in spite of their struggles with language they managed to take me into their recalled times.

Carter (1991) saw poetry as the necessary expression of such phenomenon, as it can give the "total, unified, scientifically true but emotionally charged view of the world" (IBID,p.42) which was needed. Although the co-researchers would probably not describe themselves as poets, putting into words their times of well-being drew out of them evocative images which transported the listener.

Deep Listening

All research demands the opening of one's self to the subject being considered, and this is an ongoing process. In attempting to constantly bracket my own preconceptions and biases I was entering into the practice of the discipline of deep listening (Ziegler,1986). This discipline is especially valuable in this type of research which asks people to describe times in their own lives, for then they are bringing forth their images. "The kind of listening appropriate to the sharing of images and visions ... was a very special kind" (IBID,p.II), involving becoming an 'empty vessel'. This meant that, as much as possible, my self was put aside so that I could truly hear what the participants were saying. Deep listening was also part of trying to 'hear' what the various authors were saying in the many books which were read on the topic.

As indicated, this is indeed an ongoing process. If the same questions were given to another group of co-researchers and I interviewed them perhaps different material would emerge, because I am now a better listener that when this research began.

A graduate student expressed it this way: as we read and reread and reread the material from the co-researchers; as we reflect and reflect and reflect upon that material - we begin to develop our skill of insight. As with any other skill we go through the levels of pre-control on up. At the present time I would suggest that I am in the control level; still needing to concentrate, but beginning to experience some sort of consistent success.

Analysis

As indicated above the transcripts of the co-researchers descriptions for each study were read many times, first simply to try to establish some overall picture of what was being said. As this was done certain commonalities began to emerge,and these were noted. Many statements included more than one aspect, and often seemed to fall between the labels of the categories. As more and more of the 'data' was considered in this fashion I found myself noticing a change in my understanding of the themes themselves. The categories were beginning to collapse under a larger concept. In reading the reports on other qualitative research I noticed that this appeared to be the progression adopted by other researchers. Initially I had thought that they were following a pre-determined pattern, but as I continued I began to realize that the descriptions themselves fell into a pattern when repetitively examined.

Part of analyzing the 'data' was noticing times in which the co-researchers needed to be prompted in order to continue their description. This was alluded to in the section on the questions employed in the interviews. In some cases the focus did not appear relevant, or perhaps not important enough, and so it was necessary to notice gaps or single-word replies in the interviews.

Of interest in this area was the ease of descriptive flow in the four interviews where the co-researchers were remembering times of moving well. The flow they were describing in their bodies was transmitted to their words. Perhaps these experiences tapped a deeper level of the self, a richer vein. This was especially noticeable in comparison to the interviews relative to feeling physically attractive. Those interviews had many more times of silence, and much more prompting by the myself was needed.

Reflecting was the core of the process, both in the analyzing and the writing up of this research.

> Reflection - 'bending back' ... scan memory of the past, seeking connections,discrepancies, meanings. ... The mental work of reflection includes deliberation (methodical and slow), rumination (thorough chewing), pondering (weighing or judging), and musing (aimless speculation).
>
> (Horwood,1989,p.5)

Horwood's description was accurate for the process I experienced. Just one comment relative to 'rumination' - as the 'cud' was being chewed new pieces of grass kept coming in, constantly changing the consistency. The thoroughness of the chewing is still occurring.

And Therefore ...

A major joy in doing this research was the dawning realization that it had practical implications. Over the years of this project many ideas have been effectively applied in both my teaching and therapy and have proven to be helpful. Some of the findings also call into question the research which has been done relative to body image. This latter aspect will be discussed first.

Research

The use of the term 'image' did not appear relevant to the co-researchers when considering positive experiences of their physical selves. It was, however, a useful tool when focusing on the self as an object, as was often done in the second study. If the desire of the research in that case is to somehow consider 'my body image' as compared with 'the body image' the descriptive method appeared to be more appropriate than the quantitative. Judgements regarding size and effectiveness may be entering into the analytical mode before enough description and then reflection has been done.

Study Two brought out some of the many possibilities regarding the dimensions and aspects of body image and their interactions. Whether using the descriptive or quantitative approach one must clarify which aspect of the 'picture of oneself' is being considered. For example, asking a person to judge their body size when they are a subject in a study may provoke discomfort and a corresponding picture of themselves as larger than reality, in a search for control over the situation. A person may indicate that she does not like her shoulders because they remind her of her father with whom she is angry. And when she is making the judgement of dislike is she referring to the shape of the shoulders, their possible lack of mobility, or perhaps the pain she experiences there because of arthritis? To begin to develop an accurate understanding of body image the internal and external context must be kept in mind.

The references by the co-researchers to self-consciousness brought into question the direct approach with individuals relative to their physical selves. Each time a participant indicated that her awareness of herself was the goal of her perception she appeared to see herself in a negative and partial light. If she became aware of herself as within a larger awareness and part of this larger Other she felt positive about herself. A method of questioning which prompts the latter type of focus might result in different findings relative to body image than has occurred to date.

In the discussions relative to the co-researchers' descriptions the idea of noticing parts as compared to the whole was consistently a factor. In times of well-being a person did not notice herself or her movements as parts. Being asked to do so appeared to decrease the positiveness of the experience. Therefore, research which asks people to consider and comment upon parts of themselves would appear to prompt a less-than-favorable feeling concerning the body.

When a person is asked to describe her body it is important to listen carefully in order to determine if the reply refers to the structure, the functioning, or the spirit of the individual, or perhaps another relationship not yet explored. There is so much more to this concept of body image than has been tapped. Some other possible areas for future research were mentioned in 'More Questions' under Study Two. The many theories need to be somehow integrated into the beginning of an interactive picture.

Therapy and Teaching

In many cases whether or not the suggested application is appropriate to therapy or to teaching is a moot point. In my own work the overlap is often so great that it is difficult to make any distinction. For this reason the following comments apply to both situations, unless otherwise stated.

Remember When...

One of the co-researchers in the last study referred to the interview times as part of her therapy. She found that both the remembering and the sharing of her recollections were effective treatments for her depression. As mentioned before under the discussion on 'Recall', in bringing forward into our consciousness remembered times we actually relive them. Talking about them with another reinforces the making conscious. Attempting to describe so the other can enter into the image makes it more concrete, and even more vividly lived.

Recent work on pain has brought forward a "new model for the relationship between mind and body" (Mohr,1990,p.92). According to the creator of this model, Melzack,

> all past experiences of pain may be irrevocably
> etched in the brain, stored in a form known as
> somatosensory memory, the body's own memory.
> (IBID,p.92)

If this is true for pain might it not also be true for other aspects of being physical, such as moving well? Might it not be possible that each time we experience flow in whatever situation it occurs, that there is etched within the brain a different somatosensory memory, which like the pain emerges in everyday living?

The process of visualization has been found to activate the body in a similar manner to the actual occurance (Korn et al,1983). The more concrete and intense the images

employed in the visualization, the more the body responds as if the situation being imaged is actually occurring. As mentioned earlier, as the co-researchers described their phenomenon of well-being they relived it. What they were actually doing was a visualization of the time in question. If the above paragraph is true, then in this visualization they were reinforcing the positive somatosensory memory. Or, to put it much more succinctly, they were practicing the positive.

According to Norman Cousins (1989) there are a number of self-healing chemicals which are released in the body by feelings of joy and peace and happiness - and probably by flow, although he did not specifically mention that state. Each time we allow ourselves to experience these releasing emotions we allow the healing 'ingredients' to go to work in our bodies. Thus the focus on recalling and describing positive times of our physical selves is important to our health.

Another valuable aspect of the 'remembering when' occurred later, as the co-researchers began spontaneously to reflect on what they had been recalling. The action of putting something into words for another did something. It pulled the prereflected to the reflective level. As one 'item' was tugged to the surface it often pulled along with it attached memories and images and experiences. And thus one bare memory found itself expanding, flowing into another. This was most noticeable with Joan. When she began the interview focused on 'moving well' she indicated that she couldn't really remember doing that. And then one memory crept out, followed by another and another. At the end of the interview she found herself surprised to realize that actually, she moved well a lot of the time. Emphasizing that recognition through the use of personal reflection would help her to make it a strong part of her self-image.

> Reflection can help individuals to become more
> aware of how they construct or interpret reality
> and give them greater control over and insight
> into how they objectify their social reality.
> Furthermore, this cognitive reconstruction provides
> a mental image and interpretation of experiences
> where it may be processed, evaluated, discarded
> and/or cherished.
> (Potter,1993,p.271)

Imagery, Feedback

The descriptions provided by the co-researchers were full of material which could be used in guided imagery. One example of this was the time when Joan was talking about being in the mountains and the tension slowly passing through her, being replaced by a quiet energy. The provoking of rhythm as done in the descriptions of moving well could also be useful.

Upon reading the material from 'Feeling Good' Ingrid noted how she has deliberately used the picture of herself as she was in one of the times she recalled.

> I still use this awareness sometimes to support a feeling of self-confidence of 'Hey, I'm worthwhile. I am interesting, I have achieved things' to convince myself that I can confront a challenging situation. Then I kind of expand my awareness of my body, making it feel bigger - take more space - and firmer.

As physical educators we could do more in deliberately creating body-image-building-blocks regarding movement and health in the feedback which we give to students. Actual terms from the studies, such as "smooth", "whole", and "energized" could be incorporated. Elements of flow could also be introduced in recognition that that is what the student was doing.

Another key aspect of feedback which was taught to me through the studies is the use of the question: "How did that feel?" As noted in the discussion regarding technique using this question has allowed the student to begin to reflect on what she has just done. It also allows myself as the instructor the opportunity to pick up on what the person may have seen herself doing correctly.

One major factor of moving well was the feeling, as compared to an knowledge of the correct technique. Both are important aspects to the learning of skills. However, at the present time I do not believe that there is sufficient consideration of either the kinesthetic or affective feeling, and we need to deliberately lead towards an increase in the awareness by the students of this area of the experience.

Multidimensional Sampling

Asking people how the experience felt is one example of multidimensional sampling. Another which emerged from the interviews with Joan was the idea of looking for the melody in a movement pattern. One application of this concept comes vividly to mind.

I was teaching a swimming class to university students, and one young lady and I were having trouble trying to determine what was wrong with her stroke. Technically she seemed to be doing everything correctly, but to me it looked wrong, and to her it felt wrong. Finally, rather in desperation, I asked her what tune she heard when she was swimming. She said that she didn't hear anything at all. Just then another student claimed my attention. When I could once again observe her I saw a totally different swimmer. She was smooth, easy, and relaxed. Now it looked right. And when she stopped she told me that it also felt right. When I asked her what had made the difference she replied that she had found the melody in the movement.

Perhaps we need to explore other means of 'sampling' what is happening for the student. Some of the questions which were used to prompt recall with the co-researchers might be helpful. Calling upon different senses, including emotions, may be another.

Connections

As the concept of being connected was such a strong element in the flow experiences of the co-researchers I attempted to determine how it could be evoked. One way in which I have done this in swimming is to ask the learners to think that they are riding the water, and thus to become aware of its supportive nature.

During a spring course in movement I was watching three of the male students toss back and forth a hoop covered in material. Because of the material chosen the hoop had a floating action when in the air. As we were working on imitating the stimuli I asked the men to attempt this process as they continued to throw the hoop. In doing so they more deliberately mimicked the roundness of the hoop, and began to have in their bodies the lift and lightness of the floating. Not only did this open up to them a different awareness of their own bodies, but it also improved their skill of throwing. In the imitating of the shape and effort quality of the stimuli they had made a deliberate connection to it. They had, in effect, become it.

The value of experiences in nature to one's self-esteem and understanding was

definitely underlined in the studies. This emphasizes the importance of outdoor education. Today many people in the field of outdoor education are recognizing that it is not simply the teaching of physical skills such as kayaking and rock climbing. These individuals seek to enhance the already-present dialogue with the natural elements through a variety of awareness-raising exercises, and in the provision of time to reflect upon them.

Challenge = Skill

As emphasized in the discussion of the 'Body Well' as times of flow, in order to have optimal experiences of the self there must be enough challenge to stimulate, while at the same time there is enough personal skill to accomplish. Too often our programs are geared towards either an elite few or a mediocre 'average'. If flow experiences are to occur in our programs then individuals need to be encouraged to challenge themselves, and be given opportunity to practice and develop their skills in that challenging. The movement education approach of open tasks and implementation of the learning progression is primarily designed to do these things.

Motivation

An unexpected application of the material in these studies was provided by one of the co-researchers. As Connie read over the material on the third study she indicated that she felt depressed. When quizzed about this response she said that being reminded about how good she had felt underlined, by contrast, how poorly she felt now. Due to a number of circumstances she has not been active for some time. Having been reminded of how good she felt when she was active, she immediately began a swim program for herself. As a rider who had fallen off the feather of well-being, she did as all intelligent people would do in such a circumstance. She got back on again.

As For Me

As mentioned at the beginning, this has been a voyage of exploration. At times it has been a voyage of frustration, for there were so many islands that had to be ignored, even though their importance was recognized. For example, what about how a person's perspective on life affects their picture of themselves, and how that perspective is developed and changed. And then there is the whole field of imagery, and how it relates to body

image. How could visualization be employed to help a person develop and maintain a healthier picture of herself? The impact of societal norms upon an individual's self-perception was only waved at in passing. The concept of passages or critical periods in adult lives was only touched upon. Learning theories, models of development, anthropological viewpoints - these and other islands too were passed by.

This has also been a voyage which has honed important skills. Listening to myself in order to bracket started to become an almost daily practice. As with all disciplines, this is a lifelong endeavour. It was humbling to realize how many of my ideas are embedded in the split-world view which I thought I had rejected. The 'either-or' syndrome is not easily discarded, and maybe that is because it too has its place. Trying to see things as whole and connected has shifted my perspective, and often I find myself losing my balance.

Listening and questioning in the manner advocated by Ziegler is another set of skills which has been the focus of practice. It is difficult to set myself aside in order to enter the image of another, but each time that was done the rewards were great. In a way it is like reading a good book. I was introduced to worlds I would never otherwise have seen.

And speaking of reading; seeking to discover others' thinking which would help to clarify and deepen what I was hearing from the co-researchers had led me into areas which otherwise might have never been investigated. I have developed a deep respect for writers such as Fisher who have attempted to bring together vast amounts of material on a subject. The disciplined minds of philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty have been good role models for my own thinking. People such as Csikszentmihalyi and Peck and Steinem have shown how the written word can be used to uplift and direct, even when it is reporting on dry research.

The skills involved in reflecting have also been called upon. Time to focus, to 'chew', to ponder - that is a gift for which I am very grateful. A little of the impact of this reflecting is revealed here in the report. But I believe that the changes in my outlook and behavior also demonstrate the value of reflection.

Another skill which has been practiced over the period of this research is writing. It was not until this last year that I realized how true it is that, in the qualitative approach, the main part of the research is the writing. This has been especially accurate as the major aspect which needed to be communicated was based in tacit knowledge, and that is, apparently, inexpressible. I am not a poet, but perhaps I have started to learn.

Going over the flow model pointed out to me that there has been many times of flow in this research. The goal is one which is very important to me, and that is that women would appreciate themselves, specifically their physical aspect. The challenges have certainly stretched me to the limit, and sometimes beyond. Concentration and focus has at times been incredibly deep, as forgotten friends and family will attest. And my awareness of time has changed, as I am sure my supervisory committee will agree. So in many ways this has been an optimal experience of enjoyment.

One of the main reasons that this was so was that the focus of the research was upon the positive. In the period of this research my personal life has seen some turmoil and grief. Listening to the co-researchers describe positive times in their lives, and then replaying that time and again - that was my therapy. All of the things mentioned earlier as the therapy of such recall happened for me as well. If I would have any words of wisdom for a researcher it would be this: do not only choose that which matters deeply for you. But make sure that you investigate its power and glory. Don't worry about not getting a full picture. The other side will be mentioned as a contrast. But the focus will lift you and your co-researchers into a realm of hope. And there is very little of that around.

The most important aspect of this voyage was the discovery of friends. Because we were coming together for research purposes I could ask the co-researchers deeper questions than 'How was your summer?' We found that we were able to talk at a level which is rare in today's society. As mentioned before, the women entered fully into my concern - this research. And in the process they were encouraged to talk about areas within their lives that had been important to them. I understand that there is a definite kinship among people who have been shipmates. That has become true for us.

To Conclude

As I reflect it appears that in well-being there are many 'returning-homes'. We move from the body-for-others to the body-for-self, or the lived body. We drop the masks of the everyday to see our own unique reflection. We open ourselves again to the Nature within, and in doing so find ourselves connected to all Nature, feeling again the primordial rhthyms and flow. We return to ourselves.

A man was given certain advice - to remember two things:

> First, all the potential of the universe is inside you. Second, it's inside every other human too.
>
> (Steinem,1993,p.60)

And it is inside every created aspect of this world. When we have the experiences mentioned here, we appear to realize this. And perhaps we can also then accept that we are indeed,

> ... fearfully and wonderfully made.
>
> (The Bible,Psalm 139,p.558)

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APPENDIX

Questions: Study Two

1. What comes into your mind when someone uses the term 'body image'?

2. How would you describe your body, in one word or statement?

3. If you were to compare your physical self to an animal, which one would you chose, and why?

4. If your body was another person, what kind of relationship would you have with it? (eg. acquaintance, friend, parent, stranger, etc.). Is that the relationship you would like to have?

5. What word or phrase would you use to describe how you move?

6. If you were walking down the street and someone looked out their window to watch you, what would they see?

7. How would you describe the shape of your body?

8. How important is your physical self to you? If you could be everything you are, but without a body, would you like that?

9. Has your picture of and relationship to your body changed? In what way?

10. How do you think other people perceive you, your physical self?

11. Which 'facts' about your body do you think it is important to know?

12. How would you describe the way in which your carry yourself, your carriage?

13. What would you say is a healthy body image?

14. Is there anything you would like to add?